Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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Volume 261

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Criticism of the Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights, Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers Who Lived between 1900 and 1999, from the First Published Critical Appraisals to Current Evaluations

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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (*TCLC*) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." *TCLC* "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own."

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism,* (*CLC*) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*.

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A *TCLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym is listed in the author heading and the author's actual name is given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the name of its author.

- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.

- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

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- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.

- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

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A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC.* A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC.* Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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Kuester, Martin. "Myth and Postmodernist Turn in Canadian Short Fiction: Sheila Watson, 'Antigone' (1959)." In *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations,* edited by Reginald M. Nischik, pp. 163-74. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2007. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism.* Vol. 206, edited by Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, 227-32. Detroit: Gale, 2008. The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed. (New York: MLA, 2009. Print); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

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C. Day Lewis
1904-1972

(Born Cecil Day-Lewis; also wrote under pseudonym Nicholas Blake) English poet, novelist, critic, essayist, playwright, autobiographer, and translator.

The following entry provides an overview of Day Lewis's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *CLC,* Volumes 1, 6, and 10.

INTRODUCTION

Day Lewis is often remembered as one of Britain's leading poets of the 1930s and a principal member of the so-called Auden Group of writers, which included, in addition to Day Lewis, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Louis MacNiece. For literary historians, perhaps more than critics, he is also remembered as the Poet Laureate of England from 1968 to 1972. During the turbulent years leading up to World War II, Day Lewis produced a number of significant volumes of verse, including *Transitional Poem* (1929), *From Feathers to Iron* (1932), and *The Magnetic Mountain* (1933), which reflect his left-wing political ideology and preoccupation with social themes. While his early poems treat subjects related to birth, death, the conflict between old and new world orders, and the harsh realities of modern existence, the author increasingly explored personal themes in his later work, which he expressed through more traditional verse. In addition to poetry, Day Lewis produced fiction under the pseudonym Nicholas Blake, eventually establishing a reputation as one of England's most popular and well-regarded detective novelists. While Day Lewis's reputation has waned since World War II, he remains, for some scholars, a significant figure of early twentieth-century British literature, respected for his craftsmanship and lyric virtuosity. Writing in 1977, Ian Parsons remarked that Day Lewis's skills "often enabled him to say rather complicated things with admirable precision, and to convey moods and feelings of much subtlety with an enviable discrimination."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Day Lewis was born April 27, 1904, in Ballintubber, Ireland, to Kathleen Blake and Frank Cecil Day-Lewis, a minister of the Church of Ireland. After the family moved to England in 1908, Day Lewis's mother died, leaving him in the care of his father and a maiden aunt. He was educated at home until the age of eight and then studied at Wilkie's in London and Sherborne School in Dorset. In 1923, Day Lewis was admitted to Wadham College, Oxford, where he met Rex Warner and W. H. Auden and was drawn into the postwar social idealism of Marxism. While still an undergraduate, Day Lewis self-published his first volume of poems, *Beechen Vigil, and Other Poems* (1925), followed by *Country Comets* in 1928. After graduating, the author taught for several years, holding posts at the Summer Fields School in Oxford and the Larchfield School at Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire, as well as at the Cheltenham Junior School in Gloucestershire, where he remained until 1935. In 1927, Day Lewis officially dropped the hyphen from his last name, as a gesture of "inverted snobbery," and the following year married his first wife, Mary King. Their marriage ended in divorce in 1951, after which he married Jill Balcon, an actress.

During the 1930s, Day Lewis continued to write poetry and published one of his best-known collections, *From Feathers to Iron.* The author also began writing criticism and detective novels, the first of which, *A Question of Proof,* was published in 1935 under the pseudonym Nicholas Blake. His fiction was a success, enabling him to quit teaching and devote himself to writing full time. In all, Day Lewis wrote more than twenty novels in the detective genre during his career. Although he was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain from 1935 to 1938, Day Lewis's affiliation with Marxism diminished greatly by the end of the decade. During the late 1930s and 1940s, the author continued to produce numerous volumes of poetry, as well as detective fiction, essays, criticism, and three traditional novels under his own name. In 1951, he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford, where he served until 1956. In 1954, the author also worked as a director in the publishing firm Chatto and Windus. In the years that followed, Day Lewis received numerous accolades, including honorary degrees from the Universities of Exeter and Hull and Trinity College, in Dublin. Between 1964 and 1965, he also served as the Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard. His autobiography, *The Buried Day,* was published in 1960. In 1968, Day Lewis was appointed the Poet Laureate of England, a post he held until his death. In the final years of his life, the author maintained a demanding schedule, which included meetings, readings, broadcasts, and award presentations, and continued to produce fiction and poetry. His

health grew progressively weaker, however, as he suffered from high blood pressure, diabetes, and finally cancer. After passing into a coma, Day Lewis died on May 22, 1972.

MAJOR WORKS

Day Lewis's literary reputation rests, for the most part, on several volumes of poetry written during the early twentieth century. *Transitional Poem,* his first distinctive collection of verse, is comprised of a lyric sequence divided into four parts and explores the concept of the pursuit of wholeness from various perspectives. Generally considered a more mature work than Day Lewis's previous two volumes, *Transitional Poem* marks the progress of the author's attempt to reconcile ambition, love, desire, knowledge, and attachment to the natural world with the realities of modern existence. The collection combines modern, urban, and scientific imagery with elements taken from traditional romantic verse, which, for many scholars, is the work's most innovative characteristic. Day Lewis's next volume of poetry, *From Feathers to Iron,* was inspired by the birth of his first son. It is a lyrical sequence of meditative poems, many of which are addressed to the poet's wife or unborn child. The first four lyrics introduce the metaphor of the journey, which is applied to the union of the parents, as well as the child's journey toward birth. As the sequence progresses, the poet contemplates the contrast between the "feathery" world of the womb and the "iron" world to which his son will be born. For some critics, the collection also reflects Day Lewis's political leanings, particularly his commitment to ideas that could reform the world order and bring about rebirth. In another early collection of verse, *A Time to Dance, and Other Poems* (1935), Day Lewis sought to reconcile proletarian politics with romanticism. Many of the poems in the volume, including "In Me Two Worlds," "The Conflict," and "Johnny Head-in-the-Air," depict the conflict for the poet between the claims of the past and the claims of the future. The latter poem, written in ballad form, presents the image of a crossroads, where to the right resides a beautiful but dying land and to the left a harder road that leads to a better world. The title poem of the collection, an elegy for Day Lewis's friend, L. P. Hedges, connects the poet's grief with his anger regarding the hypocrisies and corruption of society. The author's personal concerns and political commitments are also combined in *Overtures to Death, and Other Poems* (1938), which contain poems written in response to the rise of fascism in Europe. Among his most effective political poems, "The Bombers" and "Newsreel" warn of death and destruction in impending war. Another poem in the collection, "The Nabara," a narrative of a sea battle during the Spanish Civil War, treats the theme of heroic self-sacrifice. Following World War II, Day Lewis largely abandoned the political themes that dominated his earlier poetic works, focusing instead on personal themes and memories, particularly in his last volume of verse, *The Whispering Roots, and Other Poems* (1970).

Under the pseudonym Nicholas Blake, Day Lewis also achieved success in the popular detective fiction genre. For the most part, the Blake novels feature a recurring detective-protagonist named Nigel Strangeways, who is generally believed to be modeled after the author's friend and fellow-poet, W. H. Auden. A likeable and ordinary figure, Strangeways has an affinity for puns, mixed metaphors, and literary allusions, and is a master of reasoning, basing his deductions on the psychology of the people involved in his cases. Day Lewis introduced Strangeways in his first detective novel, *A Question of Proof,* which involves the murder of a boy at a preparatory school. One of his most respected detective novels, *The Beast Must Die* (1938), centers on the story of Felix Lane, a detective novelist who unsuccessfully plots to murder the hit-and-run driver that killed his son. When the driver is murdered by someone else, Strangeways is called in to investigate, along with Georgia Cavendish, a famous female explorer that the detective married in an earlier novel. *Minute for Murder* (1947), generally considered Day Lewis's masterpiece in the detective fiction genre, is inspired by the author's experiences working in the Ministry of Information during World War II. The novel takes place in the Visual Propaganda Division of the Ministry of Morale, between the defeats of Germany and Japan, and revolves around the murder of the director's secretary-mistress, who is poisoned in the presence of eight people, including Strangeways. While trying to determine the identity of the murderer, Strangeways is also mourning the death of his wife, Georgia, who was killed in the German blitz. Day Lewis also drew from his own experience for the setting of *End of Chapter* (1957), which takes place in a publishing firm not unlike Chatto and Windus. In this work, Strangeways investigates the murder of an unlikable popular writer, Millicent Miles, and develops a sympathy for the killer, who ultimately commits suicide. Day Lewis also wrote several popular novels without Strangeways, including his last work as Nicholas Blake, *The Private Wound* (1968). One of the author's most autobiographical novels, *The Private Wound* revolves around a passionate love affair recounted by Anglo-Irish writer Dominic Eyre, although the author also explores issues related to Irish politics, religion, and culture in the novel. As some scholars have noted, Day Lewis's background in poetry is evidenced in his fiction. In addition to literary allusions, leitmotivs, and arresting figures of speech, he experimented with point-of-view and narrative structure, and often presented non-linear time sequences in his detective works.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Although Day Lewis began publishing poetry in the early 1920s, it was not until 1929, when Virginia and Leonard Woolf at Hogarth Press published *Transitional Poem,* that the author drew significant critical notice. Thereafter, he was increasingly regarded as an important new voice of radical poetics, drawing attention and praise with such politically themed collections as *From Feathers to Iron* and *The Magnetic Mountain.* Day Lewis's verse was often favorably compared with Auden's poetry, and it was during this time that he came to be regarded as a leading member of the Auden Group. While the author had earned the respect of critics for his poetry, his achievements did not result in financial independence. Instead, it was his detective fiction, beginning with the novel *A Question of Proof,* that first brought Day Lewis popularity and financial success. He was able to repeat this success throughout his career, and as Nicholas Blake became one of England's most admired detective novelists. While esteem for Day Lewis's novels was on the rise, respect for his poetry reached its pinnacle during the years before World War II, especially after the publication of his *Collected Poems, 1929-1933* (1935) and *A Time to Dance, and Other Poems.* After the war, Day Lewis's reputation waned, however, particularly among younger poets and literary critics. While some detractors described his work as imitative, others reacted against the shift towards romantic and traditional forms and themes that characterized his later verse. Nevertheless, Day Lewis increasingly received academic laurels and official accolades during the postwar years, the culmination of which was his appointment to the position of Poet Laureate of England in 1968.

In the years since his death, critical interest in Day Lewis has continued to decline, although a few scholars have persisted in their study of his work. A number of commentators, including Earl F. Bargainnier, MaryKay Mahoney, and Mary P. Freier, have concentrated on the author's detective fiction. While Freier studied Day Lewis's evolution as a detective novelist, Bargainnier emphasized the "lyric quality" of his novels and claimed that in current critical circles, his "position as a novelist of mystery fiction is as high in that genre as his position among twentieth-century English poets." Other commentators, such as Walter Nash and Eavan Boland, have revisited Day Lewis's poetic achievements during his career. In his 1993 study, Nash focused on the poet's often-overlooked later verse, while Boland, writing in 1998, addressed the question of Day Lewis's artistic merit, concluding that his "was a tender, unsavage, lyrical sensibility, stranded outside the courts and centuries and systems of faith where they might have prospered." Albert Gelpi and Bernard O'Donoghue probed the reasons for Day Lewis's critical neglect in recent years. While Gelpi noted that Auden's success may have contributed to the marginalization of his contemporaries, including Day Lewis, O'Donoghue cited a "general bias against political writing" that has prevailed since the modernist period as a reason for the author's decline. Although today Day Lewis is generally regarded as a minor poet of the early twentieth century, for some scholars his various accomplishments deserve more lasting recognition. According to these critics, he is an important figure of modern British literature, whose vision and craftsmanship set him apart from other, more successful writers of the period. Gelpi, writing in 1998, praised Day Lewis's skill, as well as his ability to infuse "formal verse with the cadences of contemporary speech and the fractures of modern life," concluding that he is "a poet who belongs in the pantheon of modern poets."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Beechen Vigil, and Other Poems (poetry) 1925
Country Comets (poetry) 1928
Transitional Poem (poetry) 1929
From Feathers to Iron (poetry) 1932
Dick Willoughby (juvenile fiction) 1933
The Magnetic Mountain (poetry) 1933
A Hope for Poetry (criticism) 1934
Collected Poems, 1929-1933 (poetry) 1935
A Question of Proof [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1935
Revolution in Writing (essay) 1935
A Time to Dance, and Other Poems (poetry) 1935
The Friendly Tree (novel) 1936
Noah and the Waters (play) 1936
Shell of Death [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1936; also published as *Thou Shell of Death,* 1936
Starting Point (novel) 1937
There's Trouble Brewing [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1937
The Beast Must Die [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1938
**Overtures to Death, and Other Poems* (poetry) 1938
Child of Misfortune (novel) 1939
The Smiler with the Knife [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1939
Poems in Wartime (poetry) 1940
Selected Poems (poetry) 1940
The Summer Camp Mystery [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1940; also published as *Malice in Wonderland,* 1940
The Corpse in the Snowman [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1941; also published as *The Case of the Abominable Snowman,* 1941
**Word Over All* (poetry) 1943
The Colloquial Element in English Poetry (criticism) 1947
Minute for Murder [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1947
The Poetic Image (criticism) 1947

Collected Poems, 1929-1936 (poetry) 1948
Poems, 1943-1947 (poetry) 1948
Head of a Traveler [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1949
The Poet's Task (criticism) 1951
The Grand Manner (criticism) 1952
The Dreadful Hollow [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1953
An Italian Visit (poetry) 1953
The Lyrical Poetry of Thomas Hardy (criticism) 1953
Christmas Eve (poetry) 1954
Collected Poems (poetry) 1954
Notable Images of Virtue: Emily Bronte, George Meredith, W. B. Yeats (criticism) 1954
The Whisper in the Gloom [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1954
A Tangled Web [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1956
End of Chapter [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1957
The Newborn: D. M. B., 29th April, 1957 (poetry) 1957
Pegasus, and Other Poems (poetry) 1957
A Penknife in My Heart [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1958
The Widow's Cruise [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1959
The Buried Day (autobiography) 1960
A Book of English Lyrics (poetry) 1961
The Worm of Death [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1961
The Gate, and Other Poems (poetry) 1962
The Deadly Joker [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1963
On Not Saying Anything (poetry) 1964
Requiem for the Living (poetry) 1964
The Sad Variety [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1964
The Lyric Impulse (lectures) 1965
A Marriage Song for Albert and Barbara (poetry) 1965
The Room, and Other Poems (poetry) 1965
The Morning after Death [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1966
The Nicholas Blake Omnibus [as Nicholas Blake] (novels) 1966
The Abbey That Refused to Die (poetry) 1967
Selected Poems (poetry) 1967
Selections from His Poetry (poetry) 1967
The Private Wound [as Nicholas Blake] (novel) 1968
On Translating Poetry (lecture) 1970
The Poems of C. Day Lewis (poetry) 1970
The Whispering Roots, and Other Poems (poetry) 1970
The Complete Poems of C. Day Lewis (poetry) 1992

*These works were published together as *Short Is the Time: Poems, 1936-1943* in 1945.

CRITICISM

James G. Southworth (essay date October-December 1937)

SOURCE: Southworth, James G. "Cecil Day Lewis." *Sewanee Review* 45, no. 4 (October-December 1937): 469-83.

[*In the following essay, Southworth assesses Day Lewis's poetic career, concluding that while his "political ideology is frequently naïve," a few of his "love poems and several nature poems impregnated with revolutionary ideas" will "undoubtedly find a permanent place in our literature."*]

Interesting as are the revolutionary aspects of Mr. Day Lewis's poetry, even more so is the story of their genesis and evolution. In the final analysis the value of his work will lie in the manner in which he tells that story; not in the political conclusions at which he arrived. His political ideology is frequently naïve; not so are those of love, beauty, and ambition. More important than his ideas, however, are the rich and diverse borrowings from nature for the illumination of his ideas. His is the predicament of a man standing between two worlds torn by his loyalties to each. Because he so deeply loves the best qualities of his natural heritage he will support a revolution in order that all may share the joys of that heritage.

His revolution of society aims at the liberation of the English underdog and a reduction of the excessive privileges of the aristocracy. Every class must have equal opportunities. Lawrence pounded at this idea in *Last Poems.* Before Lawrence others had put forward the same idea both in poetry and prose. To-day the subject is the common property of the group of poets of which Mr. Day Lewis is a member.

Progress has been made, but the conditions existing a century ago seemed no worse to the men of that day than do those of today seem to men like Mr. Day Lewis. Fulke Greville, himself a member of the privileged class, has given us a picture of English society that is still essentially true today. He wrote in 1829:

> Poverty and vice and misery must always be found in a community like ours, but such frightful contrasts between the excess of luxury and splendor and these scenes of starvation and brutality ought not to be possible; but I am afraid there is more vice, more misery and penury in this country than in any other, and at the same time greater wealth. The contrasts are too striking, and such an unnatural, artificial, and unjust state of things neither can nor ought to be permanent. I am convinced that before many years elapse these things will produce some great convulsion.

'Convulsion' is too emotional a word to describe the great social changes that have already taken place; 'mutations' would be better. It is, however, the word that Mr. Day Lewis and his friends use to describe the means by which the social amelioration of the underprivileged for which they are working will be accomplished. The evolution of Mr. Day Lewis's awareness of the necessity for change, the statement of his aims, and the processes by which those aims may be accomplished are the subject-matter of his poetry.

He enunciates his general principles in ***Transitional Poem,*** gives frequent concrete examples of them in ***From Feathers to Iron,*** the poem dealing with the birth

of his son, elaborates his ideas in ***The Magnetic Mountain,*** adds significant details in some shorter poems of the volume ***A Time to Dance,*** attempts a symphonic synthesis of them in the title poem, **"A Time to Dance,"** and re-states them in the idiom of the morality play in ***Noah and the Waters.***[1] Since ***The Magnetic Mountain*** Mr. Day Lewis has done little except (by a re-statement of his ideas in different forms) to solidify his position.

The poet traces his emergence from the period of adolescent emotional pessimism to the period of sound thinking. It is the story of a thoughtful youth. No metamorphosis occurred. Because he possessed the lively sensibility of the poet, the change was more marked in him than in the average boy; but it was the result of normal processes—of the impact of four persons on a sensitive mind. A girl, by changing his lust to love, increased his comprehension; a philosopher, by teaching him dialectic, clarified his thinking and strengthened his reasoning powers; a harlot broadened his understanding of man; and a poet taught him that truths frequently result from inspiration. The result was, of course, inevitable. Discontent and ambition forced him out of himself to seek from a close contact with reality the underlying unity and harmony of the universe. His experiences, by leading him to probe the nature and power of desire, convinced him that it was the mind and not the heart that was credulous, and that only the inhabitants of the Ivory Tower (who see with the mind, not the heart) can be deluded into thinking that the deplorable social and political conditions are tolerable.

The poet, unable to find a rational explanation of the world, does not find the expanding universe made possible by science less wonderful or enthralling than the limited conception of an older generation. True wisdom or an understanding of the universe, possible only through sensuous and mystic sensation, requires a warm multiple personality disciplined by thought and expression. Truth cannot, therefore, be found in solitude. It is possible only in the "blind collisions" constantly present in city life, and then only to the person who knows every inch of the way, not only the high spots. This realization forced him to discard the traditional beliefs associated with the leisured class to which he belonged.

To strike out boldly and independently required courage, particularly in an age of "a fevered head and a cold heart" where the rulers are incapable, where those who are dissatisfied will do nothing to alleviate their dissatisfaction, and where the masses with power in their hands do not know how to be great. For his son's sake, however, he was willing to engage in the struggle for the creation of a new order, to alter the conditions under which in order to prosper a man must surrender his independence and intellectual integrity.

The task was not easy and Mr. Day Lewis communicates to us the constant struggle he waged with conflicting emotional and mental loyalties. The quiet leisured life far from the conflicts between capital and labor was pleasant to him; but, believing that anyone who attempted neutrality would be crushed, that some choice was necessary, he cast his life with the workers. His sympathies and tastes inclined him to the old order; logically and intellectually he was of the new order. Reason won. It was, and is, the poet's belief that those who are fortunate in their positions in life, who have had the advantages and have also achieved great things, have lost sight of reality. They are not aware that the under-privileged workers, having received no share in the benefits, are becoming restless. Mr. Day Lewis, seeking a broadened humanity, exposes the obstacles to its achievement. He implies that a general application should be made from his own experience.

Four defendants of the traditional order impede his progress: his mother, "public school" education, formalized religion, and his wife. He acknowledges his debt to his mother for his early training, but rebels from her possessive instinct and insists that he be permitted to live his own life. Public school education is outmoded, is blind to strange or new ideas, stifles enthusiasm, and breeds a disinterested attitude toward suffering. The church has been wholly selfish in its aims; it has not championed the cause of the poor. His wife, believing that love should be enough, is unable to recognize that love is but a part of his life. The more important part, forever shut off from her, is the solitude in which his spirit struggles upwards.

Four enemies actively resist the advent of the new order: sex, the press, lack of faith, and the rejection of the active life. Man must overcome these before his spiritual nature can dominate his material one. Woman is the eternal Circe; the press "dopes" the masses and panders to their overweening love of the sensational; the systematic faith-lacking approach to religion prevents man from seeking God in nature and in the crises of life; the poet who lacks pride and a sense of power and who fails to remain in the fight (although not he but future generations reap the benefits) is as great an enemy as any.

Until Part IV of ***The Magnetic Mountain*** we have no positive statement of what must be done. The poet has given us with less detail than did Wordsworth in *The Prelude* an autobiographical account of his early mental and emotional development from boyhood to maturity and of his increasing awareness of the forces preventing mankind from achieving complete fulfillment. Anyone who expects a practical working plan from Mr. Day Lewis will be disappointed. He has no right to expect it.

Mr. Day Lewis is not the "hierophant of an unapprehended inspiration"; he has simply attempted a poetical treatment of the intellectual ideas made current by Ber-

trand Russell, C. E. M. Joad, Walter Lippman, D. H. Lawrence, and others. His work is of his age. He believes that man has gone at so fast a pace that he needs a saviour, someone who has freed himself of all encumbrances. The followers of this saviour must be men who will sacrifice private income from investment and will be prepared to share alike, who must boldly break with the tradition whose roots are in a vanished era. These men will come from three major divisions of the population: those who love England in her natural beauty and seek refuge in her rural scenes; those who like people, are happy in a small way, and have escaped disaster; and those who have suffered beyond endurance.

These will possess the world, a coöperative commonwealth. Since, however, life is short they must act quickly. A revolution is necessary; but to be successful it must not be over-hasty. The temper of the people must first undergo a change. When conditions have been ameliorated and the big issues settled then can there be a return to sports, love, and individual achievement.

It is evident, I think, that what Mr. Day Lewis gives us is a more detailed examination of the source of his discontent than we find elsewhere in poetry. The history of the development of his mind is as important, if not more so, than his ideology. His attitude toward traditional institutions—that of a sensitive young man who after a protected youth is startled and horrified when he comes in contact with reality—is understandable. As a picture of his mind and of the minds of many in the so-called leftist-labor group his poetry is frequently of great value. It is unfortunate that in his attempt to communicate his ideas he is often dull and prosy. His solution of the difficulty by revolution is, in the manner of Shelley, youthful and naïve. For a practical working solution, his ideas are vaguely stated, hopelessly idealistic. When he can be calm with a calmness which is the result of a carefully controlled emotion, his poetry can be of definite value to that ever-increasing group which feels that every man has a right to more than a mere physical subsistence; but, and perhaps rightly so, its value will lie in its heartening powers rather than in a definite plan of procedure.

Mr. Day Lewis's treatment of love is direct. It is also unique in English literature. His fresh treatment of this old subject has been overlooked by the majority of his critics. At no time does false sentimentality mar his work. His is the honesty found in such poems as Meredith's *Modern Love.*[2] ***From Feathers to Iron,*** for example, is a minute record of the subtleties in the psychological attitudes of husband and wife to one another and to the prospective child from the period immediately preceding her pregnancy until the birth of their son.

Modern, too, is his attitude toward beauty. It can be found anywhere—even in a muddy canal:

> This glum canal has lain
> Opaque night after night
> One hour will entertain
> A jubilee of light
> And show that *beauty is*
> *A motion of the mind*
> *By its own dark caprice*
> *Directed or confined.*
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** Section 30)

Each new generation finds it in new forms, in strange places:

> Beauty breaks ground, O, in strange places.
> Seen after cloudburst down the bone-dry watercourses,
> In Texas a great gusher, a grain-
> Elevator in the Ukraine plain;
> To a new generation turns new faces.
>
> (***From Feathers to Iron,*** Section XXVI)

His attitude toward fame and greatness is sensible. To achieve immortality one should do as did Ulysses, Herodotus, Columbus, and others—mind "one's own business magnanimously", and see important meanings in every day events:

> To find a holiday
> In the sticks and mud
> Of a familiar road
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** *Section* 10)

II.

I have already mentioned that even more important than his ideas is the rich and abundant use Mr. Day Lewis makes of nature for the communication of those ideas. In his nature poetry and in those images drawn from nature he is a good poet carrying on the tradition of a great and abiding class of English poetry. In the presence of nature he does not have to lash himself into a fury of indignation at social abuse. He is calm, deeply moved, and reflective. The expression of this deeply spiritual attitude in his poetry invests it with passionate intensity. It marks him as a true poet.

It is a truism that the beauties of the English landscape have inspired such a body of nature poetry as is found in no other country. Mr. Day Lewis has assimilated the many phases of the tradition. These blend and fuse in his work. Nature induces in him a mystic attitude, serves in a symbolic capacity for his ideas of man and the universe, heightens the communication of his setting, is a source of images which vivify ideas that would otherwise remain inarticulate, and inspires him to first-rate descriptive poetry. No contemporary poet is more steeped in nature than he. He follows the tradition of Thomson and of Wordworth rather than of Cowper.

He is a mystic, for example, when at dusk—

> In that one moment of evening
> When roses are most red
> I can fold back the firmament,
> I can put time to bed—
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** *Section* 4)

he has "an instant realized", when he can grasp the significance and meaning of the universe better than he could with a life-time of experience. Although rare, the value of such moments cannot be over-estimated.

At times, however, when the mind absorbed in "its own forked speculation" attempts by a return to nature to free itself of the storm that besets it, it cannot, like Wordsworth—even in the hills of the lake district—find any balm, any comfort in her. Rationalization is no help. How can he attain to the sublimity of the mountains when even they who are above the world want to be of it! But at times, nature does exert a soothing power over him. In the crowds, obsessed with the problems of when "systems . . . that include the man" will come into being, nature heartens him—

> Then I remember the pure and granite hills
> Where first I caught an ideal tone that stills,
> Like the beloved's breath asleep, all din
> Of earth at traffic . . .
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** *Section* 14)

Before the birth of his son, it exerts a similar influence. In ***From Feathers to Iron,*** the nature images accurately reflect the poet's changing moods before and during the period of his wife's pregnancy. Fresh similes in which he compares her to the white rose and the poplar reveal her character and, perhaps even more, his. He sees, too, in the woman's condition a parallel to the returning spring:

> Earth wears a smile betrays
> What summer she has in store.
> She feels insurgent forces
> Gathering at the core,
> And a spring of rumour courses
> Through her, till the cold extreme
> Sleep of grove and grass is
> Stirred, begins to dream.

Observe, too, how he communicates the father's joy, pride, and eagerness over the approach of the child's birth:

> Now the full-throated daffodils,
> Our trumpeters in gold,
> Call resurrection from the ground
> And bid the year be bold.
>
> Today the almond tree turns pink
> The first flush of the spring;
> Winds loll and gossip through the town
> Her secret whispering . . .
>
> (Section XIV **"Now the full-throated daffodils"**)

At such times, too, nature does bring comfort:

> I see the mating plover at play
> Blowing themselves about over the green wheat,
> And in a bank I catch
> The shy scent of the primrose that prevails
> Strangely upon the heart. Here is
> The last flutter of the wind-errant soul,
> Earth's first faint tug at the earthbound soul.
> So, waiting here between winter and summer,
> Conception and fruition, I
> Take what refreshment may be had from skies
> Uncertain as the wind, prepare
> For a new route, a change of constitution.
>
> (Section XV, **"I have come so far upon my journey"**)

More important, however, is the way Mr. Day Lewis employs nature images to interpret his every thought. He does not write of nature simply because he loves her, but because by so doing he can clarify, bolster, and strengthen by comparison and contrast his communication of the protagonists' minds. We feel the father's pride in the child about to be born—

> Now too the bird must try his voice
> Upon the morning air;
> Down drowsy avenues he cries
> A novel great affair.
> He tells of royalty to be . . .

The child (Section XVIII, **"It is time to think of you"**), even though it come to a world that is "essential dark," will be—

> As anemones that renew
> Earth's innocence, be welcome.
> Out of your folded sleep
> Come, as the western winds come
> To pasture with the sheep
> On a weary of winter heights.

The harvest (Section XX, **"Sky-wide an estuary of light"**) provides an analogue to his wife's loss of beauty and agility—a loss, however, for which the child will be adequate compensation. The heaviness of his own mind at the thought that his wife might die in childbirth is reflected in the heaviness of the summer season. (Section XXVII, **"Dropping the few last days, are drops of lead."**)

Not only in such moods, however, do nature images vitalize his thought. In ***The Magnetic Mountain*** (Section 8, **"This was your world and this I owe you"**) he paints a sensuous, appealing picture of nature in order to make his break with a tradition with which he could no longer sympathize necessitate the greater courage. He definitely bolsters his political idea (Section 28,

"Though winter's barricade delays") by reflecting the new movement in the rebellious attitude of spring against winter—

> Though winter's barricade delays,
> Another season's in the air;
> We'll sow the spring in our young days,
> Found a Virginia everywhere.
>
> Look where the ranks of crocuses
> Their rebel colours will display
> Coming with quick fire to redress
> The balance of a wintry day.
>
> Those daffodils that from the mould
> Drawing a sweet breath soon shall flower,
> With a year's labour got their gold
> To spend it on a sunny hour . . .

Passages of sensuous nature descriptions abound. Quotation is difficult. They are, moreover, as I have already mentioned, closely bound up with his thought pertaining to problems of man. Impressive, however, seem to me many of the stanzas from **"Johnny Head-In-Air,"** particularly the description of his face—

> His face was pure as the *winnowed* light
> When the wild geese fly high,
> And gentle as on October evenings
> The heron-feathered sky—
>
> (**"Johnny Head-In-Air"**)

and there is a largeness which almost teases us out of thought in the following picture of dusk!

> Sky-wide an estuary of light
> Ebbs amid cloud banks out of sight.
> At her *star-anchorage* shall swing
> Earth, the old freighter, till morning.
>
> (***From Feathers to Iron,*** Section XX)

Mr. Day Lewis does not confine his description to static phenomena. He can catch the movement of clouds or crystallize the emotion connected with the approaching storm in the manner of Shelley—

> Chiefly to mind appears
> That hour on Silverhowe
> When evening's lid hung low
> And the sky was about our ears.
> Buoyed between fear and love
> We watched in eastward form
> The armadas of the storm
> And sail superbly above;
> So near, they'd split and founder
> On the least jag of sense,
> One false spark fire the immense
> Broadside the confounding thunder.
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** Section 26)

A passage in ***The Magnetic Mountain*** using musical terminology achieves a quieter but more complete picture of the beauty that is England:

> You that love England, who have an ear for her music,
> The slow movement of clouds in benediction,
> Clear arias of light thrilling over her uplands,
> Over the chords of summer sustained peacefully;
> Ceaseless the leaves' counterpoint in a west wind lively,
> Blossom and river rippling loveliest allegro,
> And the storms of wood strings brass at year's finale:
> Listen. Can you not hear the entrance of a new theme?

It is already evident from the foregoing selections that the poet appreciates the use of forceful epithet in the communication of his ideas. He surprises his readers by combining apparently antithetic elements into forceful images—at times elaborated into a sustained simile or metaphor, at others concentrated into a single word. This ability, the basis of his poetic power, reveals a controlled but rich poetic imagination. With the lighting of a fire, for example, "the hedge of darkness sprang up like a bean stalk by which our Jack aspired once." Dogs play a frequent rôle in his similes of dawn, the wind, prairie fire:

> A. Dawn like a greyhound leapt the hill-tops.
>
> (***The Magnetic Mountain,*** Section 8)

> B. The red nor'-easter is out:
> Trees in the covert strain
> Like dogs upon a leash
> And snuff the hurricane.
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** Section 32)

> C. . . . I have seen flames browsing
> On the prairie of night and tossing
> Their muzzles up at Orion.
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** Section 20)

Birds, too, help to illumine the poet's mental states. At one time, he says,

> I felt, in my scorning
> Of common poet's talk,
> As arrogant as the hawk
> When he mounts above the morning;
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** Section 1)

At another:

> Peals of the New Year once for me came tumbling
> Out of the narrow night like clusters of humming-
> Birds loosed from a black bag, and rose again
> Irresponsibly to silence: but now I strain
> To follow them and see for miles around
> Men square or shrug their shoulders at the sound.
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** Section 14)

The ardor of love finds expression in a simile of the elms:

> When in love's airs we'd lie
> Like elms we leaned together with a sigh
> And sighing severed, and no rest
> Had till that wind was past:
> Then drooped in green sickness over the plain
> Wanting our wind again.
>
> (***From Feathers to Iron,*** Section XIII)

We feel the consternation of a man trapped in a quarry by a fall of rock when

> Nightmare nags at his elbow and narrows
> Horizon to pinpoint, hope to hand's breadth,
> Slow drip the seconds, time is stalactite.
>
> (***From Feathers to Iron,*** Section XII)

Single epithets frequently crystallize a particular movement of nature and its attending emotion. The following lines, for example, would lose much were any other words substituted for "matriarch" and "draggled"; they are right:

> Could I be child again
> And grip those skirts of cloud the matriarch sky
> Draggled on mere and hillside?
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** Section 6)

The sensuousness of the scene on Lillington Common is heightened by "wallowed":

> That afternoon we lay on Lillington Common
> The land wallowed around us in the sunlight.
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** Section 3)

When he speaks of the "purple rhetoric of evening skies" a highly wrought sunset immediately flashes to mind. An insight into the writer's emotional nature is revealed by his **"Go not this road, for arc-lamps *cramp* the dawn."** He who has sat about a camp-fire readily grasps the truth of the image of darkness:

> . . . yet was I lord of
> Something: for, seeing the fall of a burnt-out faggot
> Make all the night sag down, I became lord of
> Light's interplay—stoker of an old parable.
>
> (***Transitional Poem,*** Section 3)

To speak of the wood lark's "irrelevant song" or of the hauntings of death's "black-bordered fancies" are further evidences of Mr. Day Lewis's poetic power.

III.

At times, however, he spoils the force of his achievement by a too-conscious imitation of Mr. T. S. Eliot and others. "Spoon out the waters of comfort in kilogrammes", for example, derives directly from the "I have measured out my life in coffee spoons" of Mr. Alfred Prufrock. Mr. Eliot's influence goes far deeper, however, than the similarity of an occasional image. Mr. Day Lewis has in several instances assimilated his thought and poetic texture. Perhaps I should say has partially assimilated them, because it would be impossible for a poet of Mr. Day Lewis's temperament to make a complete assimilation of as un-English a poet as Mr. Eliot. Reverberations from *The Waste Land* beat too consistently upon the ear in **"On my right are trees and a lank stream sliding."** In his image of Phlebas and in his idea that the time has come for him to set his own house in order we have additional echoes of *The Waste Land.*

Rupert Brooke's *The Great Lover* dominates "It is becoming now to declare my allegiance." Yet there is a difference. The poem fortunately lacks Brooke's facility. It possesses, instead, more of the quality of Donne struggling to come to grips with his subject.

"Moving In" is directly in the tradition of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Quieter in mood than many, this poem is more effective because the spirit of indignation is more restrained. Hopkins and Owens fuse into a third voice in the passage "Getters not begetters" (***The Magnetic Mountain,*** Section 25). Shelley and Wordsworth, too, have had a share in shaping Mr. Day Lewis's poetry. More unusual, however, is the influence of the popular song on sections of a poem the title of which is taken from *Ecclesiastes*! And Marlowe's "Come live with me and be my love" is strangely metamorphosed into a poem of trenchant political irony.

I have no quarrel with the influences; I do object to their obviousness and the way in which they frequently mar the unity of his work. They are interesting as documentary evidence of the eclecticism of his interests. It is imperative, however, that a man so steeped in all schools of English poetry should effect a synthesis from which emerges a new voice. Several poems already attest that his work will not be a distorted reflection of others.

Mr. Day Lewis has had recourse to many technical devices in order to communicate thought and emotion. In **"Make no mistake"** (***The Magnetic Mountain,*** Section 4) he makes frequent use of internal rhyme and unequal verse lenths to intensify the commonplaceness of the diction. The meter reflects the mediocrity of the majority of the passengers. In **"Let us now praise famous men"** the metrical structure communicates the dryness, stiffness, the "good form" of the public school product. No freedom or enthusiasm enlivens the verses. At other times he uses half rhymes effectively. His best work, however, is done in traditional metrical forms. **"Rest from loving and be living", "Come live with me", "It is becoming now to declare my allegiance", "Do not expect again the Phoenix hour", "Now she is like the white tree-rose",** and **"Chiefly to mind appears"** are but a few examples.

IV.

Mr. Day Lewis is typically English in the restraint of his diction. It is passionate, yet never sensual. He possesses none of Mr. Spender's oriental quality. His poetry, with the cleanness of an English landscape, is thoroughly impregnated with the love of liberty and of England which is the marrow of the finest English poetry. His work is, in fact, intensely patriotic; but patriotic in the same way in which Burns' poetry reveals his patriotism for Scotland. He does not wave a Union Jack and talk platitudes and at the same time scotch those who have been denied their English heritage. He denounces the rulers who have tried to deny the people their inalienable rights. He favors communism because he believes that under a communistic régime the masses will again come into their own.

His long poems are not wholly successful. ***Transitional Poem, From Feathers to Iron,*** and ***The Magnetic Mountain,*** being in reality a series of closely connected short poems, do not build up to one sustained emotion. **"A Time to Dance",** which follows the symphonic form, is in spite of numerous excellent passages definitely weak. The opening is dull and prosy, and the end lacks unity. ***Noah and the Waters,*** alone of them all, tends, as it proceeds, to sustain, even to intensify, the emotional communication. It is also true, however, that no extracts from the shorter lyrics give an adequate conception of his achievement.

Power reveals itself in his work the moment he associates himself closely with nature; when, in other words, he lets the child be father to the man.

I cannot help thinking that as he emerges from his revolutionary period his work will grow immeasurably. When he refrains from lashing himself into a fury of indignation, he is a poet of the first magnitude—when, in other words, he follows his own advice and surrenders himself to his demon.

I should not like to see Mr. Day Lewis lose his interest in the improvement of the condition of the underprivileged. I feel certain that every careful reader of his, Mr. Spender's, and Mr. Auden's work will never view with the same passivity the political problem demanding solution. It is only that he will move us more as his work reflects measured thought rather than youthful hysteria. In America, at least, our way of life is such that the average man comes in contact at an early age with the things that an English school boy does not encounter until he has left the university. He is not shocked, therefore, at an impressionable time of life. Since he can sympathize only with what his experience permits him to accept, he cannot sympathize with a too highly wrought expression of horror at social conditions.

The corpus of Mr. Day Lewis's work that will possess more than historical interest is still very small. A few love poems and several nature poems impregnated with revolutionary ideas will undoubtedly find a permanent place in our literature. But he does not possess the lyric gift in the highest degree. With Mr. Auden's poetry, for example, there are numerous poems in which one feels the diction is almost flawless; in his, never. I look forward to the time, however, when he puts into practice what he already knows about the danger of setting his political ideology above the problem of his technique. He has shown signs of this in ***Noah and the Waters.*** A poet must have something to say worth saying; but he must say it in a manner in which it has never before been said. Of the poet, he himself has written:

> His gaze that like the moonlight rests on all
> In level contemplation, making roof and ruin
> Treachery scorn and death into silver syllables
> And out of worn fragments a seamless coat.

He must not forget the "silver syllables".

Notes

1. I think it is important to note that *Transitional Poem, From Feathers to Iron,* and *The Magnetic Mountain* are in reality three cycles of short or comparatively short lyrics. *Transitional Poem* is divided into 34 closely related sections; *From Feathers to Iron* into 29; and *The Magnetic Mountain,* into 36. *A Time to Dance* follows the form of a symphony with its several movements, its statement of diverse themes, and the elaboration and recapitulation, closing with a finale in the classic manner.
2. I refer the reader to the following poems should he wish to corroborate my statement: *Transitional Poem,* sections 5, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27; *From Feathers to Iron,* the entire poem, particularly sections 23 and 24; *Noah and the Waters* in *A Time to Dance,* page 143.

Justin Replogle (essay date summer 1964)

SOURCE: Replogle, Justin. "The Auden Group." *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature* 5, no. 2 (summer 1964): 133-50.

[*In the following essay, Replogle traces the philosophical development of the poets of the so-called "Auden Group," including Day Lewis, particularly focusing on the shift from individualism to Marxist social theory in their works.*]

The bold literary historian can make patterns of almost anything. Dostoevsky, Joyce, Lawrence, and Freud can be bundled unhappily together in "The Search for a Fa-

ther." Or it is even possible to sweep up *The Waste Land,* "The Ancient Mariner," *Morte d'Arthur, Beowulf,* and Magdalenian rock drawings as evidence for "Studies in the Rebirth Archetype: Everyman His Own Symbol." But to make less imposing patterns, oddly enough, is not so easy. To assemble a number of artists under the heading "group," "school," or "movement" nearly always calls for a struggle just to remove the quotation marks from around these terms. Under the analyst's microscope individuals remain individuals, and artists, especially, fight wildly to maintain their uniqueness. In writing about the Auden "group" the analyst becomes sharply aware of the dangerous ease with which patterns can be made if the patternmaker stands far enough away from his subject, and of the impossibility of pattern-making if he is too close. What must be done is to observe from that middle distance where the observer is not lost in a bewildering cluster of atoms nor so far removed that similarities if not completely arbitrary, are useless or irrelevant.

In the 1930's several British writers were often lumped together under various headings, The Auden Group, The Oxford Poets, The *New Signatures* Group, the Pylon Poets. Those who supplied the tag seldom were very explicit about why they did so, though perhaps in the 1930's anyone who had grown up with literature through the Edwardians, the Georgians, and the 1920's could see something obviously new and similar in the writing that began to appear about 1930. In any case certain facts can be set out at once. There was such a thing as the Auden "group" (or rather there were two groups, one of which became *the* Auden group), composed of Auden, C. Day Lewis, and Stephen Spender, poets with similar beliefs about man and society.

The story begins at Gresham School, Holt, where in the early 1920's Auden, Christopher Isherwood, and Edward Upward began their literary careers.[1] Isherwood and Upward were close friends who spent a great deal of time creating about them a world of private jokes and secret communications, a world peopled with "enemies" and eccentric characters who found their way into a saga later called *Mortmere,* the literary source for Upward's novel *Journey to the Border* and for much of the peculiar imagery and setting found in Auden's early poetry, in Rex Warner's *The Wild Goose Chase,* and in Day Lewis's ***The Magnetic Mountain.*** At Gresham School, Auden scarcely swam into the ken of his elder literary plotters, Isherwood and Upward; they knew him only as a pasty-faced precocious boy unusually learned in psychological matters and forbidden facts about sex, gleaned largely from his father's medical library. The history really begins during Christmas vacation, 1925, when Auden and Isherwood met again by chance and discovered that each was a writer. Auden was in his first year at Oxford; Isherwood had already been expelled from Cambridge for writing comic answers to his Tripos questions. During the summer of 1926 the new friends spent days together on the Isle of Wight, indulging in foolishness, talking of literature, and fashioning about them a *Mortmere*-like private world of saga heroes and school-boys, the collection of literary knickknacks first used in Auden's "Paid on Both Sides."

Meanwhile Isherwood had maintained very close ties with his original *Mortmere* collaborator, Edward Upward, who had taken a position as tutor in Cornwall. Then sometime during the fall or winter of 1926 another figure entered the scene when Auden met C. Day Lewis, who had gone up to Wadham College in 1923. Day Lewis had already published one volume of rather undistinguished Georgian poetry, and while working on a second often conferred with his close friend, the future novelist Rex Warner. In the summer of 1927 Auden and Day Lewis were often together, and the relationship began that was to profoundly affect Day Lewis's poetry. Their friendship continued during the school year 1927-1928 when Day Lewis took a position at Summer Fields School in Oxford; and before he left the following fall to teach at Helensburgh, Scotland (where he was later followed by Auden), he and Auden co-edited *Oxford Poetry 1927* and had, Day Lewis reports, the most satisfying conversations they were ever to have.

There are no records to establish the frequency with which all these young writers met nor the exact nature of their literary commerce with one another, but their relationship was firm enough so that when Stephen Spender first timidly approached Auden in his forbidding lair during the winter of 1927-1928, he found an Auden group already formed, at least in Auden's imagination. Since Spender reports that by this time Auden already had about him his half-secret boy-scout imagery of shootings, spies, and deserted mines, it is not surprising to discover that the little group of friends he had admitted to his circle was called "the Gang." The Gang "existed in his mind," Spender recalls, "like a cabinet in the mind of a party leader."[2] Among the initiates were Robert Medley (the painter who in 1922 had first suggested to Auden that he write poetry, and who was later associated with him in The Group Theatre), Day Lewis, Rex Warner, Christopher Isherwood, Edward Upward, and after a few trial meetings, Stephen Spender.[3]

Apart from Auden these writers apparently never thought of themselves as a group, nor did they ever meet collectively. Though Spender, Auden, and Isherwood were together as early as the summer of 1928, Spender, Auden, and Day Lewis did not meet together until 1949. Yet if the writers never appeared in the same place at the same time, they saw each other in various combinations quite often. For instance, the meager records show that during the summer of 1928 Isherwood, Auden, and Spender met in London, Spender

hand-printed a volume of Auden's poems, Day Lewis spent some time with Auden, and Isherwood vacationed with Upward on the Isle of Wight. A few months later Auden talked to Isherwood about the attractions of Berlin (where he had been living) and soon (March 1929) Isherwood followed him to Germany. In the next year (1930) Spender also went to Berlin, at the invitation of Isherwood. And in the fall of that year Auden succeeded Day Lewis as a school-master in Helensburgh. Surely these facts reveal only the major events in what must have been a steady series of interactions.

In the fall and winter of 1930-31 there began a sequence of happenings of great importance for the group. In September 1930, Faber published Auden's *Poems.* Two months later, in December, Spender met John Lehmann, a young poet fresh from Cambridge, who was to become friend and editor to all the group members during the decade. In January 1931, Lehmann became associated with the Woolfs' Hogarth Press, where one of his first projects was to help assemble an anthology of young poets who represented what he and the editor, Michael Roberts, took to be a new spirit in English poetry. *New Signatures* appeared in February, 1932. In this volume Auden, Day Lewis, and Spender appeared together in print for the first time, and for the first time emerged from the private confines of Auden's Gang to become joined together in the minds of a considerably larger public. When in the following year Spender published his *Poems,* Day Lewis his Audenesque ***The Magnetic Mountain,*** Auden his revised *Poems,* and all three appeared again in a second anthology, *New Country,* "immediately," says Spender, "the names of Auden, Day Lewis and Spender were linked together by the critics."[4] In the face of this reception, Spender wrote many years later, "the myth of a coherent movement was taken over even by ourselves."[5]

So much for the group's early history. What, if anything, did they have in common, other than friendship, youth, and the "myth" of coherence? In his preface to *New Signatures,* Michael Roberts spoke of the new poets rebelling against a tradition of introspective and esoteric poetry, but this is hardly borne out by the collection itself, which contains one of Auden's most confusing private poems, the ode "To My Pupils." Roberts came closer to the truth in *New Country* when he described the new poetry as a social weapon forged to help give birth to a free communal society in which the individual could flourish. But Spender came closer yet years afterward when he called "the movement of the 1930's . . . a shift away from an individualist vision towards an ideological orthodoxy based on a political creed."[6]

Before 1933 each of the poets stressed the primary importance of the individual, although none of the writers had anything but the most limited awareness of the social implications of his individualism. In his earliest poetry Auden's views were rooted in the notion that personal and social illness was caused by modern man's habit of repressing his instinctive drives. Repression caused in the individual something akin to Freud's death wish, the symptoms of which emerged as sexual perversity, queer habits, and psychosomatic maladies without number. *The Orators* is full of this material, and it crops up as well in *Poems,* most clearly in the final sonnet which begins "Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all/ But will his negative inversion. . . ." (p. 89)[7]

One might easily deduce from Auden's analysis that the cure for society's predicament lay in some sort of psychological change in the individual, what Auden called a "change of heart." But Auden seldom made this deduction explicit, probably because in his earliest poetry he was much more interested in making poems than in analyzing society. He had said to Spender, while still at Oxford, "above all, poetry must not be concerned with politics."[8] The social theory that would provide a plan for rehabilitating society is scarcely more than latent in his very early work.

There is even less social theory, latent or otherwise, in the earliest poetry of Spender and Day Lewis, but they too focus their thought and sympathies on the predicament of individual man, caught amid certain dilemmas. In Spender's *Poems* the influence of both Marx and D. H. Lawrence is transparent, but if we are to believe his own account in *World Within World,* the Marxist material dates from late 1931, the year Edward Upward shocked his friends by joining the Communist Party. Before that, Spender reports, he and his friends considered Communism to be an extremist movement far removed from their own embryonic awareness of social issues. In most of the selections in *Poems* Spender is above all interested in the inhibitions and inadequacies of himself and other individuals, failing in a world unsuited to the needs of man. Such a mood is reflected in the Lawrentian "An 'I' can never be a great man" (p. 17) and in "Never being, but always at the edge of Being" (p. 20), "What I expected was/ Thunder, fighting" (p. 25), and numerous other poems. A political cure for human conditions begins to appear clearly only in a few Marxist poems towards the end of the volume.

Day Lewis illustrates, in still another way, that the early poetry of the group centered on the individual, while the seeds of social theory as yet lay hidden in it. Unlike Auden and Spender, Day Lewis's individualism arises from the familiar attempt of a young man to explore and test his own values, and to shape them into something resembling a consistent view of life. In ***Transitional Poem*** (1929) he struggles with ambivalent motives that lead him on the one hand to search for absolute certainties and on the other to accept the discontinuities of the earth and human experience. The

conflict is between the body and the mind, the world and the absolute, empiricism and rationalism. At the end of this often turgid and obscure work he has rejected the attempt to discover eternal forms through the power of reason, and has, in accepting the limitations of human knowledge and experience, established a philosophy that he never abandons. It is a form of optimistic materialism satisfied to "Let logic analyze the hive" while "Wisdom's content to have the honey. . . ." (p. 31) In ***Transitional Poem*** is latent, but only latent, nearly all the social theory Day Lewis later develops.

By 1933, then, members of the Auden group had several different kinds of things in common, the accident of background and education and friendship, the public appearance together in print, and poetic themes that set the individual at the center of their attentions. But this year produced a series of events that accelerated a shift in the writers' beliefs and drew them even closer together. In some ways Hitler's assumption of power in the spring of 1933, symbolic of social and political failure, really ushered in the "spirit" of the 1930's. Of course the writers considered here were undoubtedly aware of cultural turmoil that stretched back into the 1920's. Auden has since said that the England of 1925, when he went up to Oxford, had the characteristics of a waste land unknown to the Hardy-like and Tennysonian England of his childhood. Yet the general strike of 1926 found the writers on both sides of the political fence, not especially interested in the strike's political implications. Warner and Isherwood volunteered on the side of the government, Day Lewis drove a car for the TUC, and the Auden of about this same period scorned all politics as deadly for the poet. But the increasing seriousness of events in the next few years sharpened the social consciousness of all the writers. With international turbulence, unemployment, and breadlines, came increasing evidence of governmental helplessness. The Labor Party was nearly annihilated in the 1931 General Elections, and the formation of a National Government unsatisfactory to both Right and Left preceded by only a few months the appearance of the British Union of Fascists. Meanwhile Spender, Day Lewis, and presumably Auden (who spent the winter of 1928-1929 in Berlin) had witnessed the more serious political chaos on the continent. The impact of Hitler's success must have been immediately clear to writers whose knowledge of events in Germany and Austria had been gained first hand. Spender and Lehmann claim in their autobiographies that the startling rise of Fascism and the failure of democratic governments to cope with it and with concurrent economic problems were the overwhelming causes for their generation's move toward the political Left. In any case, both political events and the writers' increasing social awareness converged in the year 1933. Upward had already joined the Communist Party. Spender had begun to incorporate Marxist ideas into his poems. Isherwood had been driven out of Berlin by Nazi successes. Marxism appeared in Day Lewis's first major leftist work, ***The Magnetic Mountain,*** in 1933, and Marx himself appeared in Auden's 1933 play, *The Dance of Death.* At the end of the year, Spender wrote in *Bookman* that nearly all writers were taking political sides: Pound, Shaw, Wyndham Lewis on the right; Auden, Upward, himself and other of his friends on the left. Almost at the outset of its public appearance the group began to change, and to be drawn even more closely together by a set of shared beliefs.

The group began to share two common features, a move away from early individualism toward Marxism, and conflicting emotions and intellectual contradictions that arose from this move.

The social doctrine implicit in their early individualism became explicit only when increased political awareness pushed each writer closer to Marxism. In Spender's *Poems* the cure for human ills clearly lies in rehabilitating the individual, freeing his instincts, removing his inadequacies, developing his (largely emotional) potentialities. But it is not until *Vienna* (1934) that Spender first considers explicitly the notion of individual love as a cultural panacea, and then he does so only to reject it in favor of a Marxist program. *Vienna* is a long poem often congested with obscure imagery, modelled on Eliot's technique of stringing together images in emotional rather than logical sequence. What emerges from out of the opaqueness is that individual love, which once had seemed to offer means of restoring health in individuals and ultimately in society, is an escape from reality. Action must be taken in an arena outside the "inner worlds" of sick citizens, and Spender rejects his Lawrence-like faith in individualism to ally himself with those who act to change the environment:

> Those burrowing beneath frontier, shot as spies . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . altering
> The conformation of masses . . .
> . . . . . .
> These are
> Our ancestors.
>
> (pp. 42-43)

Day Lewis too became aware of the social implications in his early individualism only when he had moved on toward Marxism, and his statement of this awareness, in ***A Hope for Poetry*** (1934), went right to the heart of the issue. A whole new generation of writers, he said, were confronted with the problem of whether to put their faith in a program of individualism such as Lawrence had proposed or to follow the Marxist plan. For Day Lewis, the need for choice produced a serious dilemma, whether to believe that social health arose from first changing the individual (Lawrence) or the environment (Marx). His own solution, in ***The Magnetic***

Mountain (1933), is to join together Marx and Lawrence in a highly personal political vision. The marriage is a philosophical failure, but the poem does succeed in greatly increasing Day Lewis's understanding of the social philosophy implicit in ***Transitional Poem.*** The non-political materialism in that 1929 work showed the individual to be limited by no teleological necessity, to be free to shape his world to satisfy his needs. In ***The Magnetic Mountain*** this freedom becomes the condition in which the poet may travel towards his goal of a Marxist state (the magnetic mountain). Day Lewis's Communist vision is an unorthodox one, that draws heavily on Lawrence is holding out the Communist future as full of hope for developing to its fullest the potentialities of the individual. When he finally recognized the philosophical conflict between individualism and Marxism, Day Lewis moved clearly toward the latter, by remodelling his early materialism into a more Marxist framework, and by carrying a good bit of Lawrence along with him.

Auden's move toward Marxism is more subtle than either Spender's or Day Lewis's, perhaps because of his political diffidence, perhaps because his individualism as a theory had been more complete. *The Orators* (1932) is largely dominated by the psychological beliefs he developed from his wide reading in Lawrence, Freud, Groddeck, and other psychological writers investigating the means of turning sick individuals into healthy ones. *The Dance of Death* (1933), though a rather comic Marx appears amidst some pseudo-historical analysis, is still within Auden's framework of psychological individualism. But in 1935, in *Look Stranger!,* Auden is changing, and like his colleagues, only at this point does he fully recognize the social doctrine implicit in his earlier position. In a poem to Isherwood (poem XXX) he explicitly mentions that formerly he had held individual love to be the social cure-all:

> . . . the word is love
> Surely one fearless kiss would cure
> The million fevers, a stroking brush
> The insensitive refuse from the burning core.
> Was there a dragon who had closed the works
> While the starved city fed it with the Jews?
> Then love would tame it with his trainer's look.
>
> (p. 64)

But the cure through love is announced here only to be rejected. Because "Louder to-day the wireless roars," the "hour of crisis and dismay" demands "action urgent and its nature clear" (pp. 65-66). Perhaps this does not look much like Marxism today, but in the 1930's the conflict between change of heart and change of environment was an intense philosophical issue, and when Auden rejected change of heart for a program of external action, his new political orientation would have been clear to his socially conscious readers.

The years between 1933 and 1937 may be called the group's Marxist years, if the term "Marxism" is not defined too strictly. All three poets were more or less in agreement with certain things held by Marxists. They all believed that social health demanded changing the environment. They all favored a policy of action based on an empirical survey of the facts. They all agreed that the value of action was to be measured by its consequences in satisfying human needs. Day Lewis went even farther in a 1936 pamphlet when he justified revolution if it benefited the majority; Auden said much the same thing in an essay called "The Good Life" (1935). These ideas may not sound very radical nor far reaching, nor even definitely Marxist; they are nearly all shared by empirical philosophies other than Marxism. But in the 1930's espousal of these beliefs identified one with the Marxist left, and the three poets were aware of this. It is certainly accurate to say, however, that none of the poets became a very orthodox Communist; all would have been (and probably were) looked upon with suspicion by hard core Party workers. Day Lewis joined the Party in Cheltenham in 1935, but his mild, pacifist group devoted itself mostly to study, discussion, and sociability. Spender joined the Party in 1937, shortly before he violently rejected all political ideology. Auden, whose Marxist affinities seem to have been largely philosophical, has left no record of Party membership nor of political activity.

During their Marxist period none of the three relinquished convictions that seriously conflicted with certain conventional notions about Marxism. After ***The Magnetic Mountain*** Day Lewis's poetry became, if anything, even less conventionally Marxist. Several reasons for this are evident from his writing. First, as his recent autobiography makes plain, he was firmly rooted in the upper middle-class traditions of England. As the son of an Anglican clergyman, a product of public-school and Oxford, a married man, father of two children, a schoolmaster, he never shook himself free of the pleasant bonds of British middle-class convention. Second, the thoroughly empirical philosophy that he struggled to define in ***Transitional Poem*** and reaffirmed in ***From Feathers to Iron*** insisted that he eschew dogma and build his beliefs upon an honest appraisal of the facts. The facts were, as poems in ***A Time to Dance*** (1936) and ***Overtures to Death*** (1938) eloquently and consciously profess, that he cherished many of the features of old capitalist England. Third, and probably most important, Day Lewis always held poetry to be more valuable than politics, and unfortunately for his attempts to achieve intellectual consistency, his poetic theory was at odds with Marxist doctrine about man, society, and art. The evidence for this is most apparent in ***A Hope for Poetry*** where he openly recognizes his conflicting allegiance. He held the poet to be a special sort of individual whose first duty was to be honest to his private vision. Poetry might function as propaganda

(of a limited sort), but he would not yield much further to political pressure. We should tell the Communist critic, he said, that "the poet is a sensitive instrument, not a leader."[9] The poet is a type of seer; poetry expresses a vision more emotionally than intellectually apprehended, its product is more valuable than the product of rational thought. "It is the nature of the poetic vision" to perceive "invisible truths which are like electrons the basis of reality. . . . If the poet is not clairvoyant, he is nothing. And this clairvoyancy is particularly directed towards discovering the 'supernatural' in nature. . . . There can be no such thing as realist poetry."[10] This modern Romantic theory (perhaps more akin to I. A. Richards than to Shelley), with its emphasis on freedom and the individual, not to mention vaguely irrational prizings, did not sit well with Marxism.

The effect of all this was to produce poems that emphasized Day Lewis's conflicting allegiance rather than any Marxist certainty. The major theme of ***A Time to Dance*** is the poet's divided loyalty, between old England and new Communist culture, between politics and art, between the individual and the mass. **"Johnny Head-in-Air"** is the clearest illustration. When the crowd of refugees from a crumbling land come to the crossroads where they must choose between the new and the old, they find the poet crucified upon his cross of indecision, unable to offer direction, only able to reflect their own (and his) dilemma: "Traveller, know, I am here to show/ Your own divided heart" (p. 137). (Day Lewis interprets the poem himself in ***A Hope for Poetry.***) Other poems work out the same theme in somewhat different terms, most notably **"The Conflict," "Losers,"** and **"In Me Two Worlds."** Though in the end nearly every analysis of the conflict shows that enlightened thinking makes the trek toward a Marxist state imperative, the poet discovers this not to his joy, but reluctantly, even sorrowfully. It is the only alternative, not something one would choose from among numerous equally pleasant possibilities. And the political decision is nearly always so vague or metaphorical that a reader unfamiliar with the context in which these poems were written could easily contend that they are not political at all. (The only obvious Marxist passages in the volume, blatant and banal, showing how bad this leftist poetry might have been, were quickly omitted from the title poem in all subsequent editions.)

Of all the members of the group, Spender was least temperamentally fitted for Marxism. His romantic tendencies revealed themselves in more than just ill-fitting poetic theories, they permeated his entire being. From the beginning his writing demonstrates such an unbroken record of concern for his own experience and the inner nature of all humans that it seems almost superfluous to state that the individual was always at the center of his social thought. He has said himself that his political awareness arose from pity for the oppressed, and from an identification with them. His 1930 poetry is, in one very real sense, a record of his increasing attempt to make the experiences at the center of western culture personal ones. Thus even the political utterances came (he hoped) from his private suffering. His wish for Communism was that it would restore the potentialities of the individual, repressed and atrophied under decadent capitalism. Even in *Vienna,* where his renunciation of individualism and private love as a social theory forced him into the most clotted sort of obscurity, as though he must hide his meaning from his own sensibility, he tried to integrate the public events in Vienna into his private experience. His deviation from Marxism, then, was not so much a philosophical heterodoxy (Spender is the least ideational poet of the group) as the result of his instinctive identification with the suffering individual, regardless of his political affiliations. Nowhere is this more patently obvious than in his play *Trial of a Judge* (1938). Caught between the violent forces of Communism and Fascism, his liberal precepts hopelessly naive and unsound, the judge nevertheless emerges as the only noble human figure in the play. Try as he might to favor inevitable Communism rather than the judge's idealist beliefs, Spender could not withhold his sympathy from this suffering and dignified man any more than he could work up enthusiasm for the Marxist forces he tried to favor. For Spender Communism was an expedient, the only apparent way to restore individual solvency and stamp out Fascism. His allegiance to Marxism went little beyond that.

Tracing Auden's Marxism is treacherous. His borrowings are mostly general and philosophical and seldom resemble doctrinaire Communism of the 1930's. He never shows any special reverence for Marx or his followers; he seems, usually, highly detached from specific political problems, movements, or activities. And if his interest in Marxism is almost entirely philosophical, it is philosophically limited. He demonstrates very little interest in the deterministic, Hegelian, or dialectical part of Marxism; instead he appears to have borrowed Marxist ideas that would fit into his own increasingly empirical philosophy. Through the latter half of the decade his two most important philosophical assumptions are that humans may control their own fate by controlling their environment and that the value of human actions must be determined by their consequences. Since both of these ideas stress the importance of the human intellect in understanding the world and evaluating actions, Auden's former enthusiasm for instinctive behavior is therefore considerably dampened, and in 1938 he repudiated Lawrence on the grounds that though Lawrence was very "illuminating about birds, beasts and flowers," few writers had never been "sillier about those areas of human life where conscious planning is necessary."[11]

Auden's beliefs during this period are best revealed in articles and book reviews. In a 1938 issue of the *Nation* he bases his conception of human morality on Engels' statement that "Freedom is the consciousness of necessity." For Auden this doctrine establishes the foundation of a thoroughgoing empiricism. "Necessity" refers to the connections between physical phenomena that must be understood if man is to gain "a large measure of control over them."[12] Along with the Marxist notion that human personality is shaped by the environment, this conception stresses the need for physical action. Only by learning how to control the external world can man become free, and only by controlling and changing it can he also transform the nature of its inhabitants. From this there follow, inevitably, certain conclusions about morality. In a world whose character may be at least modified, if not determined, by human action, man is eternally confronted by choice. To be morally good he must exercise a choice that produces "change toward a greater freedom of action," which in turn, of course, provides him with an even greater power to control his world.[13] The obvious corollary to this is that all human actions are to be evaluated by their consequences, a belief that in "The Good Life" (1936) leads Auden to favor Marxism. In this very scholarly article Auden investigates the capacities of religion, psychology, and politics to offer man a valid program for the good life. All three disciplines are measured by their results, and with no apparent precommitment to Marxism, Auden concludes that though psychology has made a genuine contribution to man's knowledge of himself, Marxism offers a deeper understanding of causes and effects, while Christianity's contribution to human understanding and freedom has not been encouraging. But he ends with a challenge. All views must be judged by their results. If Christianity can reshape itself to provide a more valid program for human action, it may well stand superior to Marxism.

Now the appearance of these ideas in the poetry is far from obvious. Seldom does Auden poetically treat his ideas in a direct or explicit manner. More often, poems reveal the effect of his philosophical ideas on other of his perceptions, as is true, for instance, in *Look Stranger!* where, for the first time, private love appears capable of promoting evil. Having abandoned much of his Freudian-Lawrention trust in the instincts, Auden now casts an analytical eye on the possible effects of private love, and finds that if not controlled by the intellect, love may become an escape, or worse. Poem XXI, for example, shows that love may turn the individual from the reality of "terrifying mottoes" by creating worlds "as innocent as Beatrix Potter's" (p. 50). Worse yet, love may be used by political oppressors to distract attention from their evil manipulations (pp. 50-51). Elsewhere art itself becomes suspect, since it arouses private emotions and transforms the ugly world into constructions of such beauty that the menace and corruption of reality are obscured. Such is the meaning of this passage from *The Dog Beneath the Skin*: "The galleries are full of music, the pianist is storming the keys, the great cellist is crucified over his instrument,/ That none may hear the ejaculations of the sentinels/ Nor the sigh of the most numerous and the most poor" (p. 92). Both the imagery and the idea are to be found elsewhere, in the dedicatory poem prefacing *On the Frontier,* for instance: "Frantic the efforts of the violins/ To drown the song behind the guarded hill:/ The dancers do not listen; but they will."

There are other poem, of course, built directly upon the philosophical props of the freedom-necessity notion: the need for knowledge, intelligent choice, and action. The earliest of these is poem XVII in *Look Stranger!,* first published as early as November 1933. Here cultural collapse is laid to man's refusal to consciously control his world; instead, human achievements have been accepted as the "heart's spontaneous fruits" (p. 45). Control demands "disciplined love," a new idea for the poet who had so recently advocated spontaneous love as a social cure-all. Now emphasis is on the role of the intellect and action. In fact a line from this poem may be taken as Auden's philosophical slogan for this period: "For men are changed by what they do" (p. 46).

"Spain 1937," Auden's best known leftist poem (included in *Another Time,* but first published separately as *Spain*), also rests directly upon his ideas about freedom and necessity. The poem shows that individuals long to place responsibility for their world on almost anyone or anything but themselves. They cry out for some force to redeem the time, be it God as a Freudian father figure or as the divine architect of 18th-century rationalism. But one of the poem's central points is that man creates his own conditions, and that freedom demands intelligent choice and action. "'I am whatever you do,'" says the voice of history (p. 104). This theme is also the philosophical basis for "In Time of War," the sonnet sequence that emerged from Auden's 1938 trip to China with Isherwood. The first twelve sonnets show human struggles and failures in a world that offers free choice; as always man's desire is to escape into some sort of existence where the terrors of choice may be avoided. China's enemies, for instance, by ignoring the connections between events, have never realized "how flying/ Is the creation of ideas they hate" nor that "their own machines are always trying/ To push through into life" (p. 273). It is always possible "To turn away from freedom and become/ Bound like the heiress in her mother's womb. . . ." (p. 273) Auden's point again is that man makes his own world. "Nothing is given: we must find our law" (p. 283). Though the human individual should not overestimate his powers, he cannot escape making choices that determine his own future: "We live in freedom by necessity. . . ." (p. 285)

Since Auden's Marxism is highly philosophical and largely a supplement to other empirical ideas doubtless taken from a variety of sources, his commitment to Communism is never great enough to cause the fence-straddling symptoms that afflict Day Lewis and Spender. But like them he held notions that did not sit well with Marxism. Unlike them, he did not seem to care. For one thing, side by side with his cool suspicion of personal emotion and private love are poems that see in the brief moments of imperfect human love the very ephemera that offer man refreshment and meaning in a broken world. This is perhaps Audens most persistent theme, one that runs straight through all his philosophical changes. Two of his finest lyrics, "Fish in the unruffled lake" (1936) and "Lay your sleeping head, my love" (1937) develop this theme. Furthermore, alongside his rejection of religious and moral absolutes stands *The Ascent of F6* (1936), that reveals political action to be the product of psychological wounds, and advances the abbot's paradoxical religious view of man as possibly the only valid one. This departure from empirical materialism so roused Day Lewis that he called the play "negative, defeatist and dangerous" since it suggested (exactly what Auden himself condemned elsewhere) "that man's responsibility must begin and end with his own soul."[14] The upshot of all this is that Auden's Marxism was not the product of passionate conviction, but a highly intellectual, though not exclusive, commitment to an empirical view of man, nature, and society. This is most obvious in his explicit discussions of Marxism. At a time when orthodox Marxists were banished for heresies nearly inconspicuous to the outsider, Auden was gravely weighing the merits of Christianity and psychology in "The Good Life," admiring Skelton for being a reformer rather than a revolutionary in "John Skelton," and being downright frivolous (in "Letter to Lord Byron," included in *Letters From Iceland*) in joking with his serious left-wing friends who thought his fate was "to linger on an outcast/ A selfish pink old liberal to the last" (p. 74).

The Auden group disintegrated when its members no longer shared the ideas about man and society characteristic of their Marxist period. Spender was the first to break away. His own report established the time as the summer of 1937, when in Spain as a delegate to the Writers' Congress, he heard of Communist treachery in Barcelona and saw first hand some of the vanity and silliness of Communist intellectuals. Almost immediately he rejected all political conceptions of human behaviour and began writing poetry that reflected a much more thorough individualism than anything he had conceived of before. In *The Still Centre* (1939) all his immense concern for the individual, imperfectly repressed during his Marxist years, pours forth to demonstrate that personal and social health depends on private love, the contact of individual still centers. Spender's individualism here has its roots in a notion of Lawrence's that Auden had mentioned in his riddling way in *The Orators*: "Between circumference and circumference—awareness of likeness—kindness. Between centre and centre, awareness of difference—love" (p. 42). In the late 1930's Spender's beliefs were more like Lawrence's than ever before.

About 1938 Day Lewis moved from Cheltenham, ceased his Party activities, and (the evidence in his autobiography indicates) grew indifferent to political issues. Evidence from the poetry also shows that Day Lewis's Marxism ended about 1938, but does not indicate quite the diffidence he recorded more than twenty years later in his memoirs. ***Overtures to Death*** (1938) shows that events in the late 1930's began to make any social theory seem meaningless in the face of a world about to erupt in world war. In the opening poems of this volume Day Lewis writes as a man desperately warning of the collossal destruction to come. Far more serious than class conflict, this violence may destroy all classes, and Day Lewis drops his political role to identify himself with Englishmen of all sorts—all marked for death, he fears. In the volumes that follow ***Overtures to Death*** Day Lewis returns to writing of personal experiences, now completely free of Marxist significance. His own basic naturalistic philosophy, established in ***Transitional Poem,*** never changes fundamentally. All indications are that Marxism was simply added on to it in the 1930's. When his Marxism disappears, his non-political materialism remains.

Auden's retreat from beliefs shared by the group is, again, more complex than that of his colleagues, less the result of political interests and events than was theirs. His change is not as apparent as Spender's nor even Day Lewis's. He could change philosophy while scarcely altering his subjects, and his development from 1935 to the 1940's is almost imperceptibly subtle. The reader, struck by the similarity of theme, conscious of reappearing, familiar subjects throughout this period, suddenly realizes that by 1941 Auden has undergone a complete philosophical transformation.

The nature of his change can be symbolized by the evolution of his idea that freedom is the awareness of necessity. As late as 1938 this meant, for Auden, that man is not free without knowledge of his environment sufficient to control it. But by the time he published *New Year Letter* (1941) the idea that freedom is the consciousness of necessity had come to mean that freedom springs from man's awareness that he lives in a predetermined, planned universe. The change of meaning is tremendous; Auden had changed from a Marxist empiricist to a Christian existentialist.

Whatever the underlying causes of his philosophical change, the shift itself can be described (in necessarily over-simplified form) by briefly discussing some of the

basic tenets of Marx and Kierkegaard (in whom Auden became increasingly interested in the late 1930's). Both Marx and Kierkegaard agreed about certain things concerning the source and extent of man's knowledge. Each maintained that all earthly knowledge grew from man's interaction with his environment, that human values were man-made, that no values or supernatural powers outside human experience could be known. Marxist theorists (insofar as they are empirical) felt the challenge of man's dependence on himself. With no cosmic restrictions imposed on his aims and actions, man is free to act in the expectation of transforming the world to suit his needs. The philosophy is an outgoing one, stressing the importance of human action in a physical world from which all knowledge comes. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, included in his philosophical vision a God, whose existence, beyond human powers of comprehension, emphasized man's limitations. He saw as both tragic and comic man's role in a world without discernible cosmic plan, and felt that human knowledge of this world, so terribly limited to human experience, was largely chaotic and meaningless. Therefore Kierkegaard looked upon the physical universe with suspicion; he tended to withdraw from it, to judge action in a disorganized world to be meaningless, to prefer instead the search for some sort of understanding of the admittedly inscrutable nature of God. While both began with a basically empirical conception of the universe, therefore, Marx stressed the need for action based on empirical analysis, while Kierkegaard emphasized the uselessness of both action and empirical knowledge.

Towards the end of the 1930's Auden was moving away from Marx toward Kierkegaard. He began to write of man's need for absolutes not subject to the tentativeness of empirical hypotheses; at the same time he recognized that man's imperfect nature made all knowledge a product of experience and therefore subject to change. (He speaks of this at length in a 1940 article entitled "Mimesis and Allegory.") In *New York Letter* Auden begins to resolve this basic Kierkegaardian paradox. Change itself becomes the absolute: flux, chaos, impermanence are held to be pre-determined. God's plan is to make the universe appear planless to man; the only thing unchanging is change itself. Auden's 1930's empiricism evolves into a religious orthodoxy. Man no longer simply *finds* himself in a constantly changing world, as empiricists hold; he is *condemned* to live in it. Universal flux is man's punishment. To attempt not to accept this situation as necessary is to sin because it is an attempt to circumvent God's plan. Of course since change is pre-determined it cannot be successfully avoided; one can only *try* to avoid it. In the trying is the sin. So in a world of necessary chaotic change both attempting to sit still and attempting to bring order from disorder are doomed to failure. Hence man's condition according to Auden is paradoxical:

> It is not here that we belong
> Where everyone is doing wrong
> . . . . . .
> Admitting every step we make
> Will certainly be a mistake
> But still believing we can climb
> A little higher every time. . . .
>
> (p. 50)

Man is a sinful creature destined to fail if he acts and to sin if he fails to act. Freedom is the consciousness of these necessities.

At this point discussion of the Auden group may seem to have sailed out of sight of that distant shore from which, twelve or thirteen years before, the little band of writers prepared to embark. And this is, of course, the case. With the discussion of Kierkegaard and religion, the analysis has moved into the wider issues of a career that goes far beyond the 1930's. By 1940 the Auden group had disappeared, along with world-wide depression, the Spanish War, the exciting Russian social experiment, and all the other characteristic trappings of the decade before World War II. As a product of this period, the Auden group evolved with it, changing from a small group of friends, writers largely unpublished and as yet with scant knowledge of the times in which they lived, to a collection of three poets who for a short period became the major literary figures of their generation. Put most simply, Auden, Spender, and Day Lewis were a group because they shared, briefly, a similar view of man and society. Their social philosophy, at first largely unselfconscious, emerged from individualism to become rooted in an empirical Marxism. They held that man was a product of his environment, that to change him the environment had to be transformed. The universe, fitted to no pre-determined pattern, lay open to man's investigation. He could shape it as he would. That the world of the 1930's needed reshaping was manifest; that none of the traditional political parties and customary cultural forces could accomplish the needed transformation became increasingly apparent. Nevertheless all three poets were firmly rooted in a traditional Western culture which cherished values difficult to reconcile with leftist thinking. Such values tempered their Marxism, perhaps kept it theoretical, intellectual, philosophical, and heterodox. But for a short period, when issues, if not completely clear, seemed clearer than they later appeared, all three poets shared beliefs about the individual and society.[15]

Notes

1. Information about the group's history comes from the following sources: Christopher Isherwood, *Lions and Shadows* (London, 1938); John Lehmann, *The Whispering Gallery* (London, 1955); C. Day Lewis, *The Buried Day* (London, 1960); Stephen Spender, *World Within World* (London, 1951);

Stephen Spender, "W. H. Auden and His Poetry," *Atlantic Monthly* (July 1953), 74-79; Julian Symons, *The Thirties* (London, 1960).

2. *World Within World,* p. 52.
3. For the effect of this group on Auden's work see my "The Gang Myth in Auden's Early Poetry," *JEGP* [*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*], LXI, (July 1962), 351-361.
4. *World Within World,* p. 138.
5. "It Began at Oxford," *New York Times Book Review,* March 13, 1955. p. 5.
6. *The Creative Element* (London, 1953), p. 145.
7. Page numbers from the following volumes appear in the text: W. H. Auden: *Poems* (London, 1933), *The Orators* (London, 1932), *Look Stranger!* (London, 1935), with Christopher Isherwood, *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (London, 1935), with Louis MacNeice, *Letters From Iceland* (London, 1937), with Christopher Isherwood, *Journey to a War* (New York, 1939), *Another Time* (London, 1940), *New Year Letter* (London, 1941); C. Day Lewis, *Collected Poems of C. Day Lewis* (London, 1954); Stephen Spender, *Poems* (New York, 1934), *Vienna* (London, 1939).
8. Spender, "W. H. Auden and His Poetry," p. 74.
9. *A Hope For Poetry* (Oxford, 1947), p. 49.
10. *Ibid.,* p. 75.
11. "Heretics," *New Republic,* XCVI (November 1, 1938), 373.
12. "Mortality in an Age of Change," *Nation,* CXLVII (December 24, 1938), 689.
13. *Ibid.,* p. 688.
14. "Paging Mankind," *Poetry,* XLIX (January 1937), 226.
15. A brief comment should perhaps be added to explain why Isherwood, Warner, and Upward are excluded so abruptly from the later group. First, Isherwood's novels and stories do not show a move toward Marxism, and Upward's single book, *Journey to the Border,* does not reveal the poets' hesitance, conflict, and heterodoxy. Upward was a much more thorough Communist, apparently, than were his friends. Second, *Journey to the Border* was published in 1938, and Warner's *The Wild Goose Chase* (which does share the poets' views on man and society) in 1937. Thus the two novelists with greatest affinities to the group appear on the scene too late. The poets were going their separate ways, the decade of leftist literature was nearly over, its voice the voice of the poets in the Auden group.

Derek Stanford (essay date 1969)

SOURCE: Stanford, Derek. "Cecil Day Lewis." In *Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, Cecil Day Lewis,* pp. 37-44. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1969.

[*In the following essay, Stanford describes Day Lewis as a "paradoxical figure" and identifies "traditional form" as the common element between his early "verse of social commentary" and his "verse of largely private experience which he wrote in his middle and later years."*]

Self-division

Of the three Pylon poets who have written their autobiographies, Day Lewis tells us least. Stephen Spender's *World within a World* is an essential part of his *oeuvre,* while MacNeice's *The Strings Are False* proves a brilliant tragic postscript. ***The Buried Day*** (1960) by Cecil Day Lewis is more in the way of an adjunct, something to supplement the verse—to explain it and "place" it in time. This is not to say that its author practices the kind of reserve and evasions that Robert Graves favors in *Goodbye to All That.* ***The Buried Day*** does tell the poet's story, both as to his public and private existence, and at least up to his fifty-fifth birthday. What this book somehow fails to do is to convey the feeling tone of the personality we find in the verse, in the way in which Spender's or MacNeice's life stories show themselves to be *extensions in prose* of the person chiefly poetically expressive.

This is not to deny ***The Buried Day*** the status of an open and an honest book (one suspects it could give points to MacNeice on this score), but perhaps it tells us something about the *kind* of poetry that Day Lewis writes whose effects cannot be obtained in any medium save itself. That poetry I would unhesitatingly call lyrical—a poetry of the singing voice.

That the pitch of his verse has this instinctive quality, this sense of spontaneity about it, does not in any way mean, of course, that it springs from an undivided self or blithely dismisses the dues of introspection. Indeed, the poet has described himself as "a man who tends to be victimized and activated, more than most perhaps, by inner conflict." This inner conflict is very much the subject matter of his first mature poems; but whereas with Spender a similar self-division gives to his verse a reflective rhythm, tentative and slow, the same inner questioning in Day Lewis fails to retard the briskness of his verse. Perhaps this is another way of saying that Day Lewis's poetry is more of a gift, a windfall, a *donné* than with the other poets. ("For me," he tells us, "poetry comes and goes. I write verse quite prolifically for a year or two: then the impulse is exhausted. . . . These

fallow times used to disquiet me, making me think I had run dry for ever, so that I questioned whether my way of life was the right one for a poet and would have changed it radically if I had known what way would be more productive.")

The poet was born at Batinbubber, Queen's County, Ireland on April 27, 1904. The natal dwelling, though "an unpretentious building . . . [had] elegance, and symmetry and a certain romantic charm." It looked, the poet afterwards concluded, "a large house to be occupied by a curate of the Church of Ireland whose income was about £150 a year."

An only child, who lost his mother when four years old, and was brought up largely in a world of adults, Day Lewis may be thought to have enjoyed, according to Cyril Connolly, that dubious privilege of genius: a deprived childhood.

At Sherborne and later at Wadham College, Oxford, Day Lewis has left a record of himself as the typical un-self-confident undergraduate, masking his social unsureness among richer, more worldly young men by participating in athletics. He was the only one of the Pylon poets to engage at the university in the so-called Philistine world of games.

A PARADOXICAL FIGURE

Cecil Day Lewis is a paradoxical figure. No one, among the Pylon poets, was so intransigent a foe to his own class, so much a hater of the bourgeoisie, so firmly committed to social revolution. Yet no other poet of this group in his war-time and postwar-time verse appeared to be writing so much out of the Romantic mandarin tradition—a tradition that included Virgil, Wordsworth, Clare, Hardy, Yeats, Valery, and Robert Frost. For most of these the Pylon poets in their early heyday had but scant respect.

This *volte-face* is not the reversal it may seem, at least not insofar as language is concerned. Looking back now at Day Lewis's early work, one sees how Auden's dictatorship of taste was seeking to impose on the slightly older poet a field of imagery partly alien to him. In poem after poem in Day Lewis's first phase one observes him gallantly seeking to cope with images of an industrial order, only to yield, before the end, to his own natural inclinations toward imagery of a rural order.

"Let us be off" (from ***The Magnetic Mountain,*** 1933) illustrates the poet's attempt to fight against his instinctive choice in the selection of imagery. The poem, written in couplets, falls into two sections. In the first, the terms of reference are drawn from the field of railway engineering:

> Let us be off! Our steam
> Is deafening the dome.
> The needle in the gauge
> Points to a long-banked rage,
> And trembles there to show
> What a pressure's below.

But the second portion of the poem employs throughout a pastoral frame of reference. Comparing the diction of the two sections, one discovers a dichotomy more or less rigid; for while the key words of the first are "Dome" (of a locomotive), "gauge," "valve," "furnace," "coupling-rod," and "wheel," those of the second are "countryside," "daffodils," "byre," "barrow," and "meadows" with a full supporting cast of "poetic" adjectives: "honeyed," "golden," "wind-wanton," and "lovely."

The process one observes in this early poem is one we see continued throughout the poet's career, with the second field of imagery—the pastoral-agrarian—slowly taking over the main work of expression as the influence of Virgil, Frost, and Hardy gains and almost ousts that of Auden.

The poem, too, has a second surprise for us, since we take it at first, in its context of the revolutionary thirties, as a kind of allegorical journey from the capitalist industrialist present to a Utopian idyllic beauty. It is only after we have read it carefully, noticing particularly its concluding couplet

> Traveller, take care,
> Pick no flowers there!

that we realize it is a poem about love—about the act of love in fact—and that the final reference is to the lover's possessiveness concerning his beloved.

As Day Lewis has himself pointed out, "during my so-called political period, most of my poems were in fact about 'love or death'." This, perhaps, oversimplifies the issue; but in retrospect it appears substantially correct. ***From Feathers to Iron*** (1931) relates the story of how the poet and his wife wait over the months for their child to be born, just as ***Transitional Poem*** (1929) is the story of the attainment and triumph of love between a man and a woman. Both of these volumes do, indeed, carry a second or analogical meaning. The figure of the financier in the first poem is mocked by the poet who considers himself "capitalist/ In more intrinsic metal" (the private wealth of love, as distinct from the tycoon's power and possession often used to an antisocial end).

But ***Transitional Poem*** contains only hints of this, whereas ***From Feathers to Iron*** features the birth of a child as a revolutionary event: the miraculous victory of Eros and the life-force over Thanatos or death. Then,

too, the language of this book shows us that Day Lewis was thinking of the child's birth as a microcosmic rebirth of society. In a poem that commemorates the child's safe delivery, the forces of industry are seen as receiving an influx of hope from this event:

> The nine tramp steamers rusting in the estuary
> Get up full pressure for a trade revival.

All the forces of nature, in fact, are requickened:

> Wherever radiance from ashes arises—
> Willowherb glowing on abandoned slagheaps,
> Dawn budding scarlet in a bed of darkness,
> Life from exhausted womb outstriving—
> There shall the spirit be lightened and gratefully
> Take a whole holiday in honour of this.

This "double image" of birth, as applied to the private and the public world, was something that Auden, the leader of the Pylon poets, had used in an extravagant, almost doggerel *Ode* celebrating the birth of a son to Rex Warner—a minor poet of the group, later to become an original novelist:

> Who'll save, who—
> Who'll save John Bull?
> From losing his wool.
> Now, Bull, now,
> I'll tell you who,
> I'll tell you how
> The flying stationer flies round the corner.
> Here it is, look! John, son of Warner,
> John, son of Warner, shall rescue you.
>
> (from *The Orators,* 1932)

Day Lewis's poem pre-dates this, however.

The notion of birth as miraculous—as more than life-bringing in the obvious sense of the term—is the only parallel in Day Lewis that one discovers to the Christian story; unless one considers the "visiting angel, the strange new healer" (from **"You that love England"**)—clearly a borrowing from Auden's Homer Lane-like psychiatrist figure, "each healer that in a city lives"—as a significant secular parallel to the Redeemer. It is, in any case, an image seldom occurring in Day Lewis.

Although Day Lewis's early poetry contains much angled partisan verse, and he had, as Robin Skelton remarks, "shown a tendency to place his trust in Marx first and the Muse second," by 1935 he was stating in his essay ***Revolution in Poetry*** that "A good poem . . . enters deep into the stronghold of our emotions: if it is written by a good revolutionary, it is bound to have a revolutionary effect on our emotions and therefore to be essentially—though not formally—propaganda." Robin Skelton's assessment of this statement appears to me a little naive. "This conclusion," he writes, "looks very much like a compromise arranged in order to give the poet the comfort of belonging to a 'movement' and the freedom to ignore its dogmas; it is one with the numerous attempts to prove that communism was the true heir to the liberal tradition."

To understand Day Lewis's predicament here, one must return to ***Transitional Poem,*** his first book in the "new" manner. Harking back to the English nature poets, he writes there how

> I could leave wonder on the latch
> And with a whole heart watch
> The calm declension of an English year.

Georgian in subject matter, though with an elegant metaphysical manner, he declares that

> I would be pedagogue—hear poplar, lime
> And oak recite the season's paradigm.

Yet this could only be his pleasant task:

> If I bricked up ambition and gave air
> To the ancestral curse that gabbles here

—the second line being, one assumes, a reference to the ill state of the economy and public health inherited from nineteenth century industrial England.

"Singing I was at peace," he tells us, yet with "A heart long sick for some Hesperides." But the very precariousness of this pre-partisan function (Morris's "idle singer of an empty day") of the poet—his isolation from the social issues of his time—lead him to confess in his poem **"The Conflict,"** written in 1933,

> I sang as one
> Who on a tilting deck sings
> To keep men's courage up, though the wave hangs
> That shall cut off their sun.

The poet envisages himself as fallen between the two stools of "neutrality" (the attitude of the French and British democracies) and "occupation" (the state of those Central European states already overrun by the totalitarian powers). For the independent artist, the uncommitted writer, Day Lewis believes there is no place:

> And private stars fade in the blood-red dawn
> Where two worlds strive.

The image of the red dawn (standing for the holocaust of war) leads the poet to other associations of the word "red": the solidarity of a Popular Front in which the forces of Communism stand for a new social future and opposition to the death cult of fascism:

> The red advance of life
> Contracts pride, calls out the common blood,
> Beats song into a single blade,
> Makes a depth-charge of grief.

The position reached in this poem represented the limit of Day Lewis's adherence to Socialist Realism. It led him to write (in ***The Magnetic Mountain***) a number of knock-about propagandist pieces:

> Fireman and farmer, father and flapper,
> I'm speaking to you, sir, please drop that paper;
> Don't you know it's poison? Have you lost all hope?
> Aren't you ashamed, ma'am, to be taking dope?

These excoriations of the bourgeoisie in the admonitory manner of Auden were clearly a deflection of the poet's true muse, dissatisfaction with which led to the revised position set out in his essay ***Revolution in Poetry.***

It is indicative of Day Lewis's real poetic gifts that the most successful pieces of social commentary he wrote took the form of traditional verse—even though his means of expression were those of parody. **"A Carol"** (with its wry presentation of an unemployed's Christmas), **"Come live with me"** (or love on the Means Test), and **"I've heard them lilting"** (courtship in the depressed areas) all take proverbially famous lyrics as a starting point for their criticism of society.

The transition, then, from Day Lewis's verse of social commentary (on socialist assumptions) to the verse of largely private experience which he wrote in his middle and later years, affords more continuity than might have been expected. The common element was traditional form, often partly disguised in the first phase, though as the poet observed, "contrary to received opinion about modern verse, nearly all my poems 'rhyme and scan'." Day Lewis has also remarked "how an over-enthusiastic, often perfunctory use of 'modern' imagery is gradually replaced by a more personal yet wider field of images."

In his volume ***Wind over All*** (1943), one sees Day Lewis's lyric gift (meaning, here, his gift for the short lyric poem) assuming its natural traditional form, both as to diction and imagery. Whereas in the verse of the thirties he had felt called upon to insert some contemporary reminder in the poem, he now felt at liberty to include or exclude it all. The poem **"Hornpipe"** makes mention of "esplanade," "speed-boats," and "wooden spades," but we are left with no precise twentieth century picture; only, in fact, with a nineteenth century music:

> Now the peak of summers' past, the sky is overcast
> And the love we swore would last for an age seems deceit:
> Paler is the gelder since the day we first beheld her
> In blush beside the elder drifting sweet, drifting sweet.

The heady rhythm, the floral imagery, the internal rhyme, and the last phrase repeated—these are some of the devices of Victorian lyric poetry, particularly of the Irish Victorians.

Day Lewis's lyric gift is a quality innate, yet one that also has been nourished by a number of other poets. His art of verbal assimilation is seen effectively in the fifth section of ***An Italian Visit*** (1953), in which famous Florentine pictures or sculpture are described in the manner of five *other* poets (Hardy, Yeats, Frost, Auden, Dylan Thomas). No piece, however, reveals this lyric quality better than the poem **"Is it far to go?"** The theme and convention of the composition (a riddle about the nature of death) are traditional; and though Day Lewis's poem leans heavily on similar achievements in the past, it is marked by that sense of anonymity which is one of the marks of a certain type of lyric.

> Is it far to go?
> A step—no further.
> Is it hard to go?
> Ask the melting snow,
> The eddying feather

might have been written at any time between the seventeenth century and today. In all the five stanzas of the poem, there is only one line ("Quick, Rose, and kiss me") that limits it to a Victorian or twentieth century statement. A poem of this kind is good solely because it seems to lack a signature.

During the war, he took to making translations from Virgil's poetry, finding his "imagination quickened and enriched by them." His version of the ***Georgics*** came in 1940, the ***Aeneid*** in 1952, and the ***Eclogues*** in 1963. In 1946, he also published his translation of Valery's *Le Cimitière Marin,* making by this gesture of attention and homage to the Symbolist past-master of Ivory Tower speech his final break with "the rather strident tub-thumping and pylon-praising" of his earlier verse. The ex-Communist new-Georgian had become a candidate for the Laureateship, to which he was appointed in 1968.

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SOURCE: Riddel, Joseph N. "Journey from the Frontier." In *C. Day Lewis,* pp. 95-115. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1971.

[*In the following essay, Riddel assesses Day Lewis's poetry written during the 1940s and 1950s, arguing that in this period of his career, the author had to find his "future in his past," in the "a priori of his unconscious where innocence, the universal, and the eternal . . . exist and are accessible."*]

In the tense, convulsive years of the 1930's, Day Lewis had achieved prominence as a new if not entirely original voice—the singer of a new world, of a redeemable history. It was the voice, as he would later put it, of a "future-fan"; but it also was not entirely his own voice. By the time of ***Overtures to Death,*** political realities like the Spanish Civil War had served to dim his faith in futures and had returned to him, from the Marxist tradition, something of his individual talent. He later termed this talent the "lyric impulse," that very energy he had lamented in ***A Hope for Poetry*** as the dying voice in a world that called for collective action as against individual irresponsibility. For behind "lyrical poetry we feel a certain irresponsibility."

Whatever the degree of Day Lewis' originality as a poet-of-the-1930's the voice he assumed then was, in part at least, thrust upon him by historical contingency and by social circumstance—events that threatened his innate sense of community. The dismal historical failures of ideology in the late 1930's did not exactly deprive him of his subject since he was never an ideologue at heart. It did, however, deprive him of the idea of an epiphanic future, which any new community depended upon, and it thrust him into a futureless present. In ***Overtures to Death*** he was forced to reconceive his future in graver, starker, less transcendental terms. In the years immediately following, he would have to find that future in his past—not simply in the tradition to which he had always sentimentally clung, but in the a priori of his unconscious where innocence, the universal, and the eternal (which is to say, the idealized and renewable past) exist and are accessible.

I The New Communalism

Something like this faith in the communal self within is the burden of his series of Clark Lectures, delivered at Cambridge in 1946 and published as ***The Poetic Image.***[1] His best, though in many ways his most derivative, book of criticism, ***The Poetic Image*** fundamentally sums up Day Lewis' transitions of allegiance in the immediate post-1930's better than the poetry does. Without ideology to replace the old, failed religion, the poet was left not only with the old need for order or "system" but with the sole responsibility for satisfying it. He had to return to the well of some communal unconscious; for the fountain of history and tradition, if it had failed him, could not be denied. And yet, this search for the "buried self," as he later called it, is not unlike his more obvious social commitments; it is a return to the innermost roots of the past (the collective consciousness) by way of measuring the present and projecting a future. It is an attempt to realize the myth of self-renewal which must exist in tension with the reality of history. The poet whose recurrent metaphor had been the journey was still far from the home (not to mention the magnetic mountain) he sought. But, instead of making the journey into the mysterious future across evanescent frontiers (poems of ideological faith which project a space *to be* arrived at, that is, *to be* filled with life), he discovered the satisfactions of making images (that is, poems) of that home—those "notable images of virtue" that he more and more identified as the resolute wholeness of art set against the chaos of life.

Two very different yet complementary events mark Day Lewis' transition into the 1940's: the war, of course, and the disintegration of his marriage. The war brought a quick end to the abstract subtleties of ideological conflict and ushered in a time of moral simplicities. The complex moral and social (even proto-religious) antinomies of capitalism and communism gave way before an even more fundamental holy war between good and evil—the alliance of republican and Communist states against Fascism. As Day Lewis forthrightly put it in a little verse called **"Where are the War Poets?":**

> It is the logic of our times,
> No subject for immortal verse—
> That we who lived by honest dreams
> Defend the bad against the worse.
>
> (***Collected Poems,*** 228)

The issues of the war were, for the most part, too clear and urgent to stimulate a rich poetry (except where the poet's intimate involvement with its immediate incongruities and dislocations provided occasions and even metaphors of more than ideological relevance),[2] and its realities were in many cases too horrible to be contemplated at a poetic distance. And, we hasten to add, poets like Day Lewis were too morally committed to see the war with the detachment available to a later generation who would find the moral clarities blurring into the metaphysical absurd.

Strange though it is, Day Lewis was not a good war poet—perhaps because he had little direct experience of

it (except as a member of the home guard)—but more probably because it did not provoke in him any intense personal conflict or division of loyalties, as had the challenge of Marxism to his deep emotional ties with the English past. Later, in ***The Poetic Image,*** he argued that the war, in contrast to the ideological conflicts of the 1930's, had rekindled the "general imagination" (108, 110); hence, it had provided the poet with an audience more receptive to the style and thought of war poetry than the public of the previous decade had been to political ideologies. Day Lewis' argument smacks of Eliot's plea for an homologous audience and a timeless language; indeed, the book concludes with a rather problematic defense of tradition which manifests its authority to the poet in the guise of communal archetypes that guarantee him certain universal themes and images and a human audience to share them. But, if the war rekindled the "general imagination," it did not rekindle Day Lewis', nor did it move him to respond strikingly to its "common experience."

His war poems are largely conventional pieces—filled with anger; with compassion for the innocent victim, the wounded and the dying; and with solemn awe for the common sacrifices. These poems occupy but a modest amount of his consciousness. The war, like the collapse of his marriage, comes to be a metaphor for a greater theme: the inevitable breakup of the old order; the death that follows change and precedes rebirth; the inevitable violence of change (and history) that is paradoxically its essence. Like love, war is a fit of passion, an outburst of that creative-destructive energy from which life springs and by which life is victimized. Day Lewis did not callously or indifferently turn war into metaphorical grist; it only confirmed his discovery that in poetry alone, poetry which transforms experience into universally valid metaphors, could history be contained and rendered morally coherent.

The breakup of his marriage, which of course was more personally traumatic, resulted in a number of imaginative attempts to catch its reality and its meaning. In the pain of that slowly disintegrating relationship, Day Lewis sought an answer for his own inability to control events he was intimately involved in; he sought some "knowledge" of human necessity. Violence and the beautiful terror of passion, the instability of human relationships, the ceaselessly changing nature of the self, the need for love as a binding constant for community—these were themes not altogether different from those of the 1930's, except that any intellectual structure for containing them had failed and their true "romantic" origin had become clearer. Those earlier intellectual structures (the "tetragonal/ Pure symmetry of brain" in ***Transitional Poem,*** or the variations on Marxism that turned into a communal myth) were, as Day Lewis states in ***Poetic Image,*** his variants on the "great educative myths which from the earliest times inch by inch enticed man forward out of his brutishness . . . making amenable the recalcitrant earth and the dangerous spirits by mastering them in imagination, promoting religion to control superstition" (32). In this same paragraph, on the role of myth in the evolution of mind, Day Lewis remarks that the old myths "are dead" ". . . because, having performed their evolutionary task, they were needed no more. Emerging from the collective mind and illuminating it during the centuries when there was no other light, their task nevertheless was to set man on his own feet, teach him to walk by himself, to think and feel for himself, no longer one unit in a living aggregate but an individual human being. So the poetic myths are dead: and the poetic image, which is the myth of the individual, reigns in their stead" (32). Day Lewis treats myth, like the modern anthropologist, as a mode of interpretation—as man's attempt at a totalization of his understanding of his world.

The parallels with Eliot's traditionalism and his appeal to the "mythical method" are obvious, except that Day Lewis falls back upon the "myth of the individual" and not upon that of an institutionalized human condition. "The poetic myth," he argues in ***Poetic Image,*** "was created by a collective consciousness; the poetic image returns to that consciousness for its sanction. It is not merely that, time and again, we find in the images of modern poetry forms and impulses derived from the myths; but the very nature of the image—of poetry in its metaphorical aspect—invokes that consciousness, as though man, even at his most individual, still seeks emotional reassurance from the sense of community, not community with his fellow-beings alone, but with whatever is living in the universe, and with the dead" (32-33). Thus Day Lewis rationalized what we may call a shift from the objective to the subjective ground of community.

As Spender had argued at the close of the 1930's, the poet needs an orthodoxy in which to contain the chaos of modernity, but "political orthodoxy has a great disadvantage: it leaves nothing to the imagination," while religious orthodoxy is "a structure within which great art can exist, because however strictly it may be defined, the main terms are mysterious and leave room for invention and contemplation."[3]

For all too brief a time political orthodoxy of one kind had seemed to Day Lewis and even to Spender to provide the essential latitude of mystery; certainly, we must observe that the concern over the failure of ideology as religion was both common and urgent in the late 1930's. And, though Day Lewis was hesitant about the possibilities of a new religious orthodoxy, his "myth of the individual," the belief in the "poetic image," was what he had instead of God. It is, as it were, a belief in the poet and his commitment, and in the act of imagination by which he comes to know his emerging self. The

poetic image is the structure of some primordial event, of the mystery of origins, and whether the poet consciously alludes to mythology or linguistically structures his private experience, he is participating in the "community" of the "poetic image."

II Love and War

In 1940 Day Lewis published a modest sheaf of verse entitled ***Poems in Wartime,*** which three years later was incorporated into the more substantial ***Word Over All,*** a volume which more than anything else reveals the degree to which personal and historical pressure short-circuited his creativity. Relatively few in number, the poems are not especially distinguished, except, as John Wain has recently said, that they are more his own, less dependent on models than any he wrote before or after.[4] The war poems, referred to earlier, constitute substantially the second part of the book's three divisions and, except for the title poem, speak quietly and conventionally of compassion and pity. They are, as Clifford Dyment has said, poems which identify Day Lewis once more with his countrymen and their cause in a pact of love.[5] And that identification in itself bespeaks their lack of vitality. It is one thing to be imaginatively engaged and quite another to give the self passively and anonymously to the larger community—and a great number of the war poems assume that anonymous voice of a country wounded but self-secure in its commitment. If in the 1930's Day Lewis had found himself vitally challenged by a disintegrating world, in the landscape of war he had found community, brotherhood, love, and a role beyond alienation.

But the distinctive tone of the volume relates it to the poems of nature and childhood which stood out so purely in ***Overtures to Death.*** In the face of historical crisis, Day Lewis found his subject matter to be the buried self. "What links the real to the wraith?" he asked in a somewhat later poem in ***Collected Poems*** (248). If any motif binds together the poetry written between 1938 and 1947 it is the problematic of identity. ***Word Over All*** borrows its title from Whitman, though not even the title poem is Whit manesque. The "word" Day Lewis beseeches is not exactly Whitman's transcendental energy which marries life and death, purifying "this soiled world"; it is the poet's "image" which, as a poem with that title (226) puts it, is Perseus' shield to the Medusa of the present (see also ***Poetic Image,*** 99 and 104, for a discussion of this "image"). In this dark and guilty world of violence, death alone absolves all contradictions and assures the continuity of selves. Whitman's word was death (the immanence of unity), but Day Lewis' is love. The title poem puts his hope for poetry directly: "Words are to set man's joy and suffering there/ In constellations" (222). The contradiction in Day Lewis' art lies between his demands, on the one hand, for a self-transcending poetry, which with Whitman's energy might transmute the ordinary into the prophetic, and his inability, on the other, to escape the limits of his essential materialism. What Day Lewis lacked, in other words, was a Whitman-like faith in the transcendental origins of poetic energy and hence in a monistic world, though the essential presumption of ***The Poetic Image*** is the poet's faith in the immanent human order of consciousness.

Love as the binding force, then, is Day Lewis' equivalent for the "word over all." This mystique of love leads him in time of crisis back to his countrymen and provokes such sentimental occasional poems as **"Watching Post"** (226) and **"The Stand-To"** (227), which pay homage to the home-guard company he served as leader. These poems celebrate his identification with the English yeomanry, which had been evident in his early poetry and even latent in his Marxism. If love, and not sentiment, is the motivation of these poems, they are consistent with his celebrations of love's restorative power, and with his fundamental sense of love as the spiritual equivalent of science's laws of universal harmony and thus the innate source of man's need of community.

But even love, Day Lewis has to conclude in one of the volume's better poems, **"The Assertion,"** is a force both creative and destructive. The poem opens with an irregular stanza of violent metaphors ("the fighter spinning like vertigo/ On the axis of the trapped pilot . . ."), which rhetorically concludes that in this time, "when man seems born to hurt," it is "time we assert/ To their face that men are love" (225). The urgency of assertion—the rhetorical necessity of the poem to "assert"—reflects Day Lewis' style of the 1930's rather more than the lyric style he was critically opting for. The poem ends:

> For love's no laughing matter,
> Never was a free gift, an angel, a fixed equator.
> Love's the big boss at whose side for ever slouches
> The shadow of the gunman: he's mortar and dynamite;
> Antelope, drinking pool, but the tiger too that crouches.
> Therefore be wise in the dark hour to admit
> The logic of the gunman's trigger,
> Embrace the explosive element, learn the need
> Of tiger for antelope and antelope for tiger.

Love is energy, both generative and destructive, both synthesizing yet atomizing. It is the essential emotional vitality of life and, ambiguously, the energy or force in which death lives. It is animal, both antelope and tiger, or grace and violence, fused into one—form and content.

The war poems are placed between two groups of more personally centered lyrics in the structure of ***Word Over All.*** The book opens with the sonnet **"The Lighted**

House" (211) which exploits a Poesque metaphor of inner space. It is a poem of the divided self or the alienated imagination, the recluse of the house and the "dead beat traveller out of the storm" seeking a way back to refuge. His return, "Peeling off fear after fear, revealing love's true form," is in itself a metaphor of Day Lewis' own quest to make himself whole again, to marry once more unconscious and conscious, emotion and rational, timeless and historical self.

The more engaging poems of the book center upon memories, or return to the subterranean darkness of the earlier self. These poems manifest several kinds of release: most obviously, from the immediate pressures of the war. But by that very release they introduce a new conflict. Too many of them are simply nostalgic and sentimental. A few, like **"Departure in the Dark"** and **"O Dreams, O Destinations,"** evince not only the old technical skill but the power of Day Lewis' submerged memories. The motif of the former derived from the poet's childhood and provided the tensions for his pervasive journey metaphor. "Nothing so sharply reminds a man he is mortal/ As leaving a place" (213), it begins; and it continues by exploring the paradox in terms of the Israelite journey from bondage into the mystery of freedom: "The desire/ Going forth meets the desire returning." The dominant mood is death, "the last of his dark departures" which, like the Israelite "desert of freedom," both attracts and repels. The poem is a personal reprise on his more ideological journeys.

The particular quality of Day Lewis' treatment of this all-too-familiar theme of desire and death lies in his ability to translate it into his own dilemma, caught as he is in the middle of his own journey in a time of violence and disintegrating personal relationships. The sonnet sequence **"O Dreams, O Destinations"** (216) is his most successful realization and resolution of the paradox. Its nine poems move from the child's "time" (figured in the self-contained image of a "humming shell") through his fall into time ("the ruination of innocence") and the desire to "build a road" back out of time (to restore "the appetite for wholeness" now lost), which is really an "illusion" that sustains the search. The poem, in brief, is a carefully examined look at the paradoxical desire "To escape time, always to start anew."

The success of **"O Dreams, O Destinations"** lies in its careful modulation of imagery, of which the first sonnet is a good example:

> For infants time is like a humming shell
> Heard between sleep and sleep, wherein the shores
> Foam-fringed, wind-fluted of the strange earth dwell
> And the sea's cavernous hunger faintly roars.
> It is the humming pole of summer lanes
> Whose sound quivers like heat-haze endlessly
> Over the corn, over the poppied plains—
> An emanation from the earth or sky.
> Faintly they hear, through the womb's lingering haze,
> A rumour of that sea to which they are born:
> They hear the ringing pole of summer days,
> But need not know what hungers for the corn.
> They are the lisping rushes in a stream—
> Grace-notes of a profound, legato dream.

The "humming shell" is a precise image of time as space, self-contained yet indefinite. It provides the basic image patterns of sea and sound, the harmonies of a totally self-sufficient realm. The "shell" is like a "womb," or the latent memory of the womb, another sea with sound, its echoes sensuous and imprecise like remembered summers. In all, this encapsulated time is a whole world, sensuous and fertile, but impalpable like a "heat-haze." The residual world of primordial memory, it is, as the second sonnet echoes, a "Tissue of mist." The "time" of the "shell" is the synchronic time of myth, poetry, dreams, and thus the "poetic image."

The shift from "shell" to clearing "mist," from a world of fertile harmonies and faintly ominous sounds to a world of emerging consciousness, delicately extends the paradox. The poet's controlling voice only recalls the child's innocence, even as it recognizes the child's compulsion to assume the world and time—that is, to fall and claim his own life. "Reaching towards the far thing, we begin it" is the theme of the third sonnet and of the poem as a whole. The fall is sensuous, sexual, theological, philosophical—experience emerging into self-consciousness, to be contained in paradoxes of form:

> Man only casts the image of his joys
> Beyond his senses' reach; and by this fateful
> Act, he confirms the ambiguous power of choice.
> Innocence made that first choice. It is she
> Who weeps, a child chained to the outraged tree.
>
> (217)

The remaining six sonnets explore the resolutions possible to one who knows he fights a war which "has no end" and whose "appetite for wholeness" is at once life will and death wish. They celebrate youth, "dead youth," as energy, the *élan vital,* youth as the "sacred river" of the self which is to be recovered, if at all, only in "illusion." The sequence as a whole forfeits the comfort of this "illusion" even while borrowing its sustenance. The poet lives on his desire for a phoenix rebirth—"To escape time, always to start anew"—but he counters wish with reality: "Travellers, we're fabric of the road we go;/We settle, but like feathers on time's flow."

Word Over All makes it sadly evident that the times provided Day Lewis with little of the confidence necessary for either sustaining illusion or confronting reality. He did not find the encompassing "Word," and he seldom generated the shielding "image" of a pure poetry.

That is, he did not have the time to find his own voice, though almost every poem evinces his recognition that he must find it and that it resides in some arcane realm of an earlier self:

> What links the real to the wraith?
> My self repudiates myself of yesterday;
> But the words it lived in and cast like a shell keep faith
> With that dead self always.
>
> (248)

Living in time and change, the poet's very act (manifest in language) lives on the death of his earlier self. Language is continuous with the past and his earlier self, and in it he fulfills his commerce with the past and things eternal, the center of a purer imagination. The act of poetry remained a two-way journey, away from the earlier self yet toward it. Like the seashell, the poem builds layers of time upon itself, discovering the continuity within history's apparent discontinuities.

III Modern Love

Poems 1943-1947 is a more coherent and satisfactory book, if only because it is obsessed with the meaning and consequences of one primary event: the breakup of his marriage, or, as he put it in the opening poem, **"The Double Vision"** (***Collected Poems,*** 247): "how most human loves protract/ Themselves to unreality—the fact/ Drained of its virtue by the image it made." The poem serves as prologue to Day Lewis' own *Modern Love.* For obvious reasons, George Meredith is the governing spirit of the book; and in 1948, when Day Lewis contributed an introduction to a new edition of *Modern Love,* he interpreted Meredith's achievement as a foreshadowing of his own time, when a rigid but not necessarily virtuous system of ethics (Victorian morality) fell away, throwing the ethical center back upon the finite self: "Strength of feeling is made the supreme sanction for a state of affairs it has already caused, and by which it is therefore compromised: the warring mind becomes sole judge over the conflict that divides it: the victim is required to be also his own inquisitor, adviser and support."[6] Day Lewis' admiration for Meredith is not fully explained by their similar marital situations. What he sought in Meredith was a kindred spirit, one who like himself stood at a historical and moral watershed where the old sense of metaphysical and social community was giving way to a post-Romantic sense of individual isolation in a centerless universe. Thomas Hardy shares with Meredith this role of spiritual ancestor; and associated with them is Emily Brontë, who inspires one poem and later was the subject of one of Day Lewis' more penetrating essays.[7] For Miss Brontë is Day Lewis' figure of the "beating wings" of desire in a purely dehumanized cosmos. The creative passion incarnate, she is "Chained to a dream" and "Burning for pure freedom" (279); but she lived nonetheless with the conscious knowledge of necessity. Similarly Hardy, who confronted the same despair not with "beating wings" of passionate revolt but with a mordant irony that modulated hate into compassion, helplessness into stoicism.

This retreat to an earlier generation, predecessors of the Georgians whose willed innocence had so affected Day Lewis as a child and alienated him as a young man, has perplexed a number of critics who regard it as another form of turning away from the present. Anthony Thwaite, for example, has puzzled over how one judges a "20th century poet who, after helping achieve the poetic revolution of our time, reacts in his prime by writing work which is pastiche—very competent pastiche—of two eminent Victorian critics (Meredith and Hardy)."[8] Perhaps because Thwaite ascribes more originality to Day Lewis' "poetic revolution" than it deserves, he fails to see that the poet's turning to appropriate predecessors is consistent with his traditionalism and even with his Marxism. Moreover, the retreat is consistent with his understanding that, when the system fails, then the center of authority is returned to the Romantic self. Yet this mortal self is neither stable nor enduring; it is "divided."

The coherence of self, Day Lewis had always concluded, depends on the coherence of the culture (the system) which subsumes it—thus his stress on family; his sense of divorce as the living present. His argument for the primacy of environment went back at least to the Preface of *Oxford Poetry, 1927.* Seeking identification with earlier poets who were confronted by the same dilemma of a disintegrating system, Day Lewis was in effect seeking the only community and tradition remaining to him—the creative mind whose passionate longing for freedom and order was in itself the only freedom and order. In short, Day Lewis' retreat is another affirmation of the mind which manifests its wholeness in the "poetic image." If his poets are not exactly legislators to man, they are at least passionate opponents of man's (and history's) chaos.

The larger part of the ***Poems 1943-1947*** consists of a Meredithian sequence on the growth, flowering, and failure of human love; or, in Day Lewis' somewhat expanded variation, it is an autobiographical sequence which occasionally imitates Meredith by slipping into a psychological mode, assuming the point of view of the woman, and playing out the ironies of a dialogue in which there is no communication. But, above and beyond the obviously personal instigation, the sequence is devoted first to a search for the earlier self (the "wraith" to his present "real" self), and second to what Day Lewis called, when speaking of *Modern Love,* the "moral, psychological and poetic truth" of man's victimization by his passions: "We are betrayed by what is false within."[9] The two themes are complementary. The

craving for what Meredith called the "buried day" (the phrase Day Lewis borrowed for the title of his memoirs) he saw to be the nostalgia for some past ideal relationship, the analogue of primal unity, and hence a wish (a kind of death wish?) that human relationships might be finally stable.

The enduring modern quality of Meredith's sequence, as Day Lewis saw it, was that it gave the moral, psychological, and poetic lie to this nostalgic idyl. Day Lewis' own excavations of memory are testimony to his belief that poetry is not the lesson but the experience of truth; hence, he must peel away the layers of his relationships back to the moment of innocence that apparently preceded them, thus disabusing himself of the idea that he could ever relive the past. For only by escaping nostalgia could he relive the past: be reborn in a new and fresh love, not chained to the ambiguities of a nostalgic one or the regretful memory of one that has failed.

The autobiographical sequence in ***Poems 1943-1947*** opens with a prologue (**"The Double Vision"**); plunges into the remembered earlier self (**"Juvenilia"** and **"Sketches for a Self-Portrait"**) in an attempt to find the seeds of his deficiency in later relationships; then develops through four Meredithian variations on the marriage relationship (**"Marriage of Two," "Married Dialogue," "The Woman Alone,"** and **"Ending"**); and concludes with two speculations on the meaning of love's failure (**"Heart and Mind"** and **"A Failure"**). Needless to say, Day Lewis does not presume to do anything so daring or sustained as *Modern Love*. And it is revealing that he is most different from Meredith in the degree to which he is obsessed with his earlier, youthful self as being unprepared for enduring relationships.

"Juvenilia" (247) and **"Sketches for a Self-Portrait"** (250) are the two most successful poems in the sequences. The former is a tightly composed exploration of the "primitive mural" of an earlier self, upon which the present self is "superimposed." In this poem of time, the bewildered self which thinks of itself as organically continuous discovers that the present self lives in the successive deaths of the earlier. The relationship of the "real to the wraith" perplexes and casts light on the present death of love which he is suffering:

> And since at every stage I need
> A death, a new self to reveal me,
> And only through oblivion's veil can read
> The signs of what befell me,
> May not the grave of rigored love
> Be but one more abyss
> Between two peaks, appointed to compel me
> Along the chain of light?
>
> (249)

Whether the poem will bear the weight of its sexual puns (on death) is a question made irrelevant only because of its imprecise appeal to the sentimental vision of rebirth.

"Sketches," which is less successful as a total poem, is more abundant in snippets, actual and emblematic, of Day Lewis' formative years. It is a poem of the fall from innocence—a poem of solitude and longing, or, in a striking metaphor, his "*coitus interruptus* with a cheating world" (251). Most revealing is his struggle to contain the world in words, the urgency of the self-conscious self to recover his oneness with the world in language:

> Oh, innocent vice—
> Could everything be reduced to a form of words!
> But they were only a guesswork map of the terrain
> Where soon I should have to fight; or else a petition
> To be exempted.
>
> (253)

Like so many others in this time-obsessed book, the poem is structured upon the paradox of the poet's (child's and lover's) desire to compose his own world within world, to contain reality in words, to annex the other, all the while aware that the struggle little avails. The primordial language is contained within the words he speaks but is no longer available in its purity. The actuality of the marriage destroys the illusion of a stable world, either a self-centered world of words or one built on enduring relationships. The present relationship embodies "a thousand repetitions/ Of a routine immemorial" (254). The failure of love becomes the metaphysical norm of present history. **"Marriage of Two"** (254) and **"Married Dialogue"** (255) move sharply from paradox to irony; and **"The Woman Alone"** (258) strives, after Meredith, to project into the female conscience by way of catching the ultimate and inevitable failure of love—built ironically on a passion which exists only to destroy itself. For passion is the complement and antithesis of the creative imagination. The metaphorical male-female antithesis and dialectic of his earlier poetry comes into focus in the actuality of his lived experience only to become metaphor once more.

Poems 1943-1947 is intrinsically time-haunted, whether Day Lewis is exploring the instability of love or the essential life of "images." **"New Year's Eve"** (272), the only moderately long piece in the book, reveals the essential preoccupations. Without Audenesque contortions, challenging even the clichéd motif of the year's simultaneous death and rebirth, the poem seems to resolve for Day Lewis the ambiguities of lived time (**"Walled up in time"**), the phoenix life of passion, love, and human relations of all kinds: "Bound by the curse of man—/ To live in his future, which is to live surely/ In his own death—we endure the embrace of the

present/ But yearn for a being beyond us" (274). The poem is in two parts: an Ode, which examines the paradox of living in time (that is, in consciousness) which drives man to live "in his future"; and a Meditation, which offers the only resolution to living one's own death, in either past or future. The solution is to live fully in the present, that eternally transitional ground between the two. For the present is "nothing unless it is spun from/ A live thread out of the past"; and the poet can only conclude:

> To live the present, then, not to live for it—
> Let this be one of today's
> Resolutions; and the other, its corollary,
> To court the commonplace.
>
> (277)

Day Lewis' need to "look with the naked eye of the Now" and hence "to witness the rare in the common" is in effect the need of the poet to live in his act of poetry. This need is derived from his fall into a world without magic, unless in his own powers he can find the eloquence of the ordinary. In other words, to live the present—the present informed by the tinges of memory—is to live in the moment of creating the poem, objectifying the self in the world, and hence to live in the constant remaking of the self: "My flesh and blood, themselves a web of experience discarded, renewed, amassed" (277). **"New Year's Eve"** is in effect Day Lewis' final repudiation of the Marxist apocalypse, which after all had always been a dubious consolation. His materialism in the 1930's had rejected the more idealistic qualities of Marxism for its more pragmatic and immediate virtue of action. In short, as he came to distrust the past which latently held him, he could not wholly leap into the compelling future: he had to find some way of living the "Now," that moment of transition, like New Year's Day, between past and future. Only in the act of poetry could it be both lived and conserved.

It is not surprising that Day Lewis found not only Hardy and Meredith but Paul Valéry his poet of the moment. And, while Day Lewis' translation of "La Cimetière de marin" into a rather literal English meditative poem indicated an unwillingness or inability to follow Valéry into the absolute abstraction of a purely poetic (and for Valéry, purely mental) world, the act of translation testifies to Day Lewis' interest in at least one aspect of Valéry's theory and practice: his stress on the self-creative (or self-re-creating) act of mind—the poem as purification and renewal. For Day Lewis, however, renewal did not necessarily mean purification in the sense Valéry implies. For Day Lewis, it seems to suggest only that rebirth of the stagnant social self: the act by which, reembracing the present with its incessant change, one survived the inevitable death of one's own passion and the love it recurrently creates and destroys: ". . . though my days are/ Repetitive, dull, disjointed," he writes, "I must continue to practice them over and over/ Like a five-finger exercise" (278). Poetry ritualizes time and lends to one's days whatever sanctity they may have.

In the early 1950's, shortly after his second marriage, Day Lewis undertook a long, unorthodox "travel" poem in which, as in ***Transitional Poem,*** he attempted to reassess the potential wholeness of the self. But he was by this time no longer convinced, as he had earlier been, of the "tetragonal/ Pure symmetry of brain." On the contrary, the totality of self could no longer be contemplated in the image of a composed space; it had to be seen as stretched upon the time of its consciousness (the duration of the past or memory, present or sensation, and future or idea). This shift from a view of self as *essence* to a view of self as *being* is integral to Day Lewis' changing style, a preparation for the more modestly humanist poetry of the last two decades: the "permanent myth," as he called it in ***Poetic Image,*** of man's "unending struggle with his fate" (157).

IV The Longest Journey

An Italian Visit, Day Lewis' longest single poem, is another transitional piece. Published in 1953 as a single volume, it serves not only to introduce a third phase of his poetic career but to compose those fragmentary, fugitive explorations of the divided self which preoccupied him in the 1940's. Taking his epigraph from Jasper More's *The Land of Italy,* Day Lewis returned to his journey metaphor, this time to snatch the putative fulfillment denied him in earlier years: "an Italian visit is a voyage of discovery," More wrote, "not only of scenery and cities, but also of the latent faculties of the traveller's heart and mind" (***Collected Poems,*** 303). This poem concerns the tripartite self recomposed, made whole in self-knowledge, or in the consciousness of its various nature—made whole, that is, in the language of the poem, man's only possible "ideal home" (356).

An Italian Visit returned momentarily to the ambitious and contrived poems of Day Lewis' earlier invention and turned away from the lyrical mode toward which his style had been developing. In this sense, the poem of intellectual accounting is self-consciously transitional, the kind of poem he seemed compelled to write at given intervals. As such, it returned to Day Lewis' earlier analytic mode, treating the self as a composite of abstractions, as the meeting point of three degrees of time consciousness. Yet despite its strategy, the poem is an attempt to move beyond this simplified view of self, to catch (in the image of a continuous dialogue) the interacting consciousness of historical man who is struggling to satisfy his appetite to live simultaneously in a world composed of immediate sensation, memory, and the a priori of received ideas or given language.

Day Lewis' strategy is to use a kind of populist persona and to effect a kind of dramatic narrative. (The poem is,

of course, a metaphorical condensation of his own trip to Italy after his second marriage.) The single self (or traveler) of the poem is three: Tom, Dick, and Harry, who represent, respectively, the hedonist, the traditionalist, and the idealist. To see them another way, Tom lives for the moment, the life of sensation, the present; Dick sees the present only in terms of the past, his imagination determined by the authority of tradition; and Harry is both analytic and synthetic, concerned with past and present only as evidence from which to project the possible, the future. The end of the poem is predictable within this beginning, and it suffers from contrivance. But the work is Day Lewis' last attempt at a major poem, which is to say, a major self-integration. For if an Italian journey is a voyage of discovery and an initiation rite, it is also, as every Englishman knows, a health cure—a new beginning.

Divided into seven parts, ***An Italian Visit*** affects a variety of styles, each limited by the demands of a somewhat colloquial dialogue, the conventions of descriptive poetry, and deliberate parody. Because the poem tends to be what one reviewer called reportage,[10] the style dissipates both its intellectual and emotional effect. The sacrifice, we suspect, is something Day Lewis willingly made in order to reach a wider audience with what might otherwise be an unpopular intellectual poem. In this sense, it would be but another of his periodic attempts to reduce the distance between poet and audience. Interestingly and revealingly, the poem reaches out, on the one hand, to the common reader and, on the other, to the poetic tradition—an attempt to take the measure, we presume, of the poet that Day Lewis had discovered himself to be.

An Italian Visit opens with a **"Dialogue at the Airport"** which establishes the points of view of Tom, Dick, and Harry. Their fixed consciousnesses, ironically, are not changed by the visit but rather are confirmed by it, and, in that moment of recognition, reunified. The change is in the total self, the harmonizing of the self's diverse and conflicting allegiances in the awareness that each in and by itself is incomplete. Their first destination is Rome, the Eternal City, the manifest Past; and their anticipations of Rome define each. Only Dick views the city as the "nonpareil," away from which all history has led and to which all values must return. For Tom history is irrelevant: the old world provides only new sensations which set in motion the "primitive dance" of the senses. And Harry considers the journey as a means, and hence the necessary incidental, to a greater end:

> Yes, travel is travail: a witless
> Ordeal of self-abasement to an irreversible process.
> It would be nice, waking as it were from twilight, sleep, to
> Find the new bourne beside one.
>
> (309)

Harry knows the meaning of journeys—"Each journey's a bid for the empyrean/ Of absolute freedom" (311)—but his living for the future is, as Day Lewis puts it in **"New Year's Eve,"** "to live surely/ In [one's] own death" (279). The dialogue at the airport is a tangle of partial perspectives, any one of which cannot exist without the other: Tom's *tabula rasa* of the senses (or in another image, his pure film) can record no distinct pattern without Dick's a priori forms, or the enduring image of tradition which conveys value and order into the present. And, without either the vital "now" or the anterior order, Harry has no foundation to project from fact to idea, from experience to truth. Harry is an Audenesque consciousness, the follower of Groddeck, Freud, and Marx; and a futurist who would dismiss the past were it not that reality, after all, was idea—some eternally repeated pattern like the dance. Harry represents the rationalist mind in which Day Lewis placed so much trust in ***Transitional Poem,*** and in Harry's perspective the partial wisdoms of Tom and Dick are completed. Once the points of view are established, Day Lewis repeats the ideas to excess, lest they be confused. And, in a rhetorical style that is neither distinguished dialogue nor intellectually concise, he betrays his dual purpose to write an intellectual poem for the common audience.

In the second section of ***An Italian Visit,*** however, Day Lewis modulates his style into a descriptive-narrative sequence. The stylistic changes in the volume recall, in fact, the structural variation of ***A Time to Dance.*** Part Two, **"Flight to Italy,"** is nevertheless an indulgence, a playing with extravagant metaphors. The airplane is conceived in the hyperbolic image of a "bull": the flight as Europa's journey to Crete. Moreover, the plane is a "womb," the journey (like that of the fetus in ***From Feathers to Iron***) a "trance prenatal." In short, the flight is a journey of renewal; the arrival at Rome, a "phoenix moment." The description of the flight, however, resists the metaphorical weight thrust upon it; for Day Lewis' insistence on the mythical relevance of the flight is lost in the imagistic detail of modern technology. The total effect recalls Day Lewis poetry of the 1930's—a verse that renders occasionally striking images and metaphors but, on the whole, loses intensity by not synthesizing its parts.

Part Three shifts once more, to the Audenesque "letter" form. Called **"A Letter from Rome,"** it is a disquisition on ideological naivete, and most particularly on the failure of Day Lewis' generation to take proper cognizance of the past and tradition. It is a confessional poem above all:

> We who "flowered" in the Thirties
> Were an odd lot; sceptical yet susceptible,
> Dour though enthusiastic, horizon-addicts
> And future-fans, terribly apt to ask what
> Our all-very-fine sensations were in aid of.
> We did not, you will remember, come to coo.

> Still, there is hope for us. Rome has absorbed
> Other barbarians: yes, and there's nobody quite so
> Sensuously rich and reckless as the reformed
> Puritan. . . . This by the way, to establish a viewpoint.
>
> (322)

The viewpoint of **"A Letter from Rome"** is that of an "horizon addict" who has lost his faith in futures, whose time is running out, and who desperately needs to set present history in past perspective if he is to know any possible future. Rome, the manifest record of history's "grand design," is marked here and there by the present and its "abject means." Rome is the accumulation of myths, and hence of human meanings—of those forms which, the more they change, the more they remain the same. Hence Rome is "eternal," yet present: ". . . but a sense of the past, to be truly/Felicitous, demands some belief in the present. . . ." Buried in Rome, now a part of that past yet symbols of alienation from their and the poet's tradition, are Keats and Shelley. And, as the poet stands by their graves, he hears the incongruous blare of jazz "drowned by the ghost of a nightingale." But, amid this "family of exiles," the poet finds himself and discovers his inevitable role. He thus feels at home, yet he turns away once more to move on to Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance and the last great period of a transcendental art.

"Bus to Florence," Part Four, is an eloquent, largely descriptive travelogue that serves more to alter the scene of the poem than to advance its theme. Yet it serves a rather subtle function in the larger sequence. A poem of love, it is dedicated to the poet's "beautiful creature" (his new wife?), who has reintegrated his sensibility. The recording of impressions of the journey evinces this new sensitiveness, this renewal. The journey itself through the ancient Italian countryside is a return, as it were, to a "simple time," a magical time, a time preceding Rome's awesome formalizations of belief—but it is a world into which the modern consciousness can only "dip." "It's sequence I lack, the talent to grasp/ Not a here-and-there phrase/ But the music entire, its original strain and logic" (332), the poet recognizes. What he lacks, in other words, is what love in part restores: the emotional cohesion to his fragmentary intellect. At the end of the ride, he and his bride alight as one; he is renewed and made whole in her presence; she has become his "eyes."

And Part Five moves on to what her eyes (the synthetic feminine vision) see. Called **"Florence: Works of Art,"** it is the most ambitious piece in the sequence, a complex look at man's struggle to know the "all-encroaching" Past by way of knowing himself. The section begins with a formal address to Florence as the unavailable Past, whose glory is "catalogued,/ A norm for scholars and for gentlemen":

> Plodding the galleries, we ask how can
> That century of the Uncommon Man,
> Sovereign here in paint, bronze, marble, suit
> The new narcissism of the Also-Ran.

The poet-tourist hopes not to recapture the Past but to be elevated by it; not to repeat his heritage but to fulfill it. But he lives in the pedestrian century of the common man, a centerless, solipsistic time.

The greater part of the fifth section consists of five parodies, each a poem based on a piece of classical Renaissance art, the style of each poem a parody of a by-now classical modern poet: Luca Della Robbia's *Singing Children* as interpreted by Hardy; Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes,* by Yeats; Leonardo's *Annunciation,* by Frost; Piero di Cosimo's *Perseus Rescuing Andromeda,* by Auden; and Verrochio's *Boy with Dolphin,* by Dylan Thomas. Though of varying quality and aptness, the parodies are consistently clever if not always penetrating. Those "by" Frost and Auden are especially sensitive to stylistic nuance, the Auden poem being cast in Auden's own ironic stanza form of "Under Which Lyre," a poem mocking the age of the common man. The Yeats poem parodies "A Prayer for My Daughter," while the Hardy and Thomas pieces essentially echo the gestures of ironist and apocalyptic, respectively.

But the strategy of the parodies is central to the poem's theme. The five Renaissance masters which serve as inspiration submit only reluctantly to the modern styles. And, in turn, the five moderns are frustrated in their efforts to penetrate the intrinsic order of the earlier culture. The parodies, in other words, present the dilemma of the modern who must create order, not reflect that of a coherent past he feels to be a part of his being. The style of the modern is his own atom of meaning, distinct from every other. The Renaissance masters uncommonly reflect a common and coherent world; the five poets translate Renaissance *concordia discors* into modern alienation, the modern myth, the "myth of the individual" as Day Lewis' called in the ***The Poetic Image.*** And Day Lewis, in his own parodic alliance with his modern masters and peers, realizes the tentativeness of his ties with tradition, the blurred effort. The confession of his tendency to imitate becomes an explanation of it:

> And if I miss that radiance where it flies,
> Something is gained in the mere exercise
> Of strenuous submission, the attempt
> To lose and find oneself through others' eyes.
>
> (339)

The last two parts of ***An Italian Visit*** are the least successful of the group. Part Six, **"Elegy Before Death: At Settignano,"** is a series of reflections on time: on how to capture in a "melting Now the formula/ Of always" (345). It is, in brief, a poem of resignation, an

embrace of time and the Paradise of the Now in which man has only brief "tenure." The lesson of Florence and Rome has been the lesson of history as change, of the eternal as change. Thus the concluding section, cast in the form of a "Homeward Prospect," returns to Tom, Dick, and Harry once more for their respective gleanings from the journey. Tom is full of new sensations; Dick, grown dour that the Past he has touched cannot be repossessed; Harry, now somewhat distrustful of the "elegant systems" into which he has cast experience and projected a future.

The return home is toward a new kind of wholeness. The journey into the Past has made contact with the unconscious and memory—not alone the personal but the cultural consciousness. But the retreat, as Day Lewis views it, is not like Eliot's historical nostalgia. It is an understanding of history as myth, the accumulation of man-centered forms. Just as the Dick of every self must be complemented by the Tom, the teleology of any Harry must be projected cautiously from the substance of new sensations and from the knowledge of memory. Environment (if no longer brute materialism) continues its hold on Day Lewis, heavily qualifying his faith in the "tetragonal/ Pure symmetry of brain."

The poem ends with a series of speculations on "home." To Harry, home is the place where we "inter our travels" (empirical experiences) so that they might "germinate" into ideas which protect us, like dreams, against the brute fact of routine or time. For Tom, home is a place of continually new sensations. And for Dick, it is the place one "can never quit": "An ideal home, if you like, which you spend a lifetime building/ Out of whatever comes to hand" (356). Home, to put it simply, is the composed world of the poem, the ideal wholeness of the "poetic image" toward which each poetic journey—even though leading away into the Past—moves. It is a "home," however, built of fragments out of the means at hand. The modern poet does not take his inspiration from God, but is what the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss calls a *bricoleur* or craftsman who builds with whatever means are available rather than having his materials cut to a predesigned plan. Metaphysically, the difference between the *bricoleur* and the engineer, the man who must improvise and the man who constructs by design, is the difference between a world with a center (God or logos) and a world without a center. In Day Lewis' world, the only center is self-divided man, who must pull the Tom, Dick, and Harry of himself together again. Home, thus, is the place where experience germinates into reality, where idea and act coexist. It is an ideal of self, with its divided parts recomposed. But, if it is the ideal image of a completed poem, so is it the ideal end of a fully realized self—like the tombs of Keats and Shelly.

An Italian Visit, strange as it may seem, is a poem about the poetic process and, hence, about the life process: based on the faith of renewal, and on the dream that man sustains himself in his struggle to become whole again, even if his wholeness lies only at the end of all journeys, the "empyrean future" that is death. If, in the end, the poet recognizes this dream of wholeness is illusion, the illusion is nonetheless an animus. The struggle does avail; the poet lives in building his home, in renewing himself. The journey is inward and backward, but only to return to the now, not to escape time. Its destination is the mystery of the human, which alone dreams beyond itself in order to live in the now. In that dream, it learns to live in its own death: "Losing my heart to this alien land, I renew my true love:/ Lending my love to death, I gained this grain of vision./ I took my pen. What I wrote is thanks to her and to Italy" (148). These are the poem's closing lines and also the last ones of Day Lewis' ***Collected Poems.*** A kind of credo and prophecy, they are heralds to the saving grace (secular) of imagination, which binds fragments into unity, or love. The poetry that has followed has been the humble result of a humble struggle—the slow, dogged building of his final home, as may be seen in the increasing number of metaphors of enclosure in his recent poems. Day Lewis has written no more ambitious poems and no more truly original ones, but those which did follow ***An Italian Visit*** were no less "necessary poems," the rooms of some projected "ideal home."

Notes

1. *The Poetic Image* (London, 1947).
2. For the most thorough and penetrating study of the artist's problem in transforming a violent and dehumanizing reality into literary form, see the second major section, "Violence," of Frederick J. Hoffman, *The Mortal No, Death and the Modern Imagination* (Princeton, N.J., 1964).
3. "The Creative Imagination in the World Today," *Folios of New Writing* (London, 1940), p. 157.
4. *The New Republic* (June 24, 1967), 21-24.
5. Clifford Dyment, *C. Day Lewis* (London, 1955), p. 38.
6. Introduction, *Modern Love,* ed. C. Day Lewis (London, 1948), p. xxi.
7. The poem entitled "Emily Brontë" appears in *Poems 1943-1947* (see *Collected Poems,* 278), while the essay called "Emily Brontë and Freedom" may be found in *Notable Images of Virtue* (Toronto, 1954).
8. *Contemporary English Poetry* (London, 1959), p. 92.
9. Introduction, *Modern Love,* p. viii.
10. See "Poetry as Reportage," *Times Literary Supplement* (Mar. 6, 1953), 152.

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Earl F. Bargainnier (essay date 1984)

SOURCE: Bargainnier, Earl F. "Nicholas Blake (C. Day Lewis)." In *Twelve Englishmen of Mystery,* edited by Earl F. Bargainnier, pp. 142-68. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1984.

[*In the following essay, Bargainnier evaluates Day Lewis's detective fiction, written under the pseudonym Nicholas Blake, focusing on the author's treatment of the detective genre conventions and the relationship between his career as a poet and as a detective novelist, as well as the characteristics of his primary protagonist, Nigel Strangeways.*]

As Nicholas Blake, C. Day Lewis published twenty mystery novels among the more than eighty volumes of poetry, fiction, criticism and translation he wrote or edited. His position as a novelist of mystery fiction is as high in that genre as his position among twentieth-century English poets, even if the official recognition as Poet Laureate is ignored. These dual writing careers offer an approach to the Blake novels. If this essay were to have a sub title, it should perhaps most appropriately be "The Poet as Detective Novelist," but limiting a study of the Blake novels only to their relationship to their author's being a poet would be to fail in acknowledging their excellence as novels of mystery—whatever their author's success in other forms of literature. Therefore, the essay is divided into three sections: "The Poet as Detective Novelist," those relationships between the two careers which affect the novels; "The Detective Novelist as Detective Novelist," Blake's handling of the principal features of detective fiction; and "The Poet as Detective," an examination of Nigel Strangeways, the protagonist of sixteen of Blake's novels.[1]

THE POET AS DETECTIVE NOVELIST

We have turned inward for our iron ration;
Tapping the vein and sole reserve of passion,
Drawing from poetry's capital what we can.
. . . . . .
. . . Our exile and extravagances,
Revolt, retreat, fine faiths, disordered fancies
Are but the poet's search for a right soil
Where words may settle, marry, and conceive an
Imagined truth. . . .

"Dedicatory Stanzas," *The Georgics of Virgil,* C. Day Lewis.

As a third of the "Auden-Spender-Day Lewis triumvirate" of British poetry in the 1930s, Cecil Day Lewis was considered—and considered himself—a revolutionary, but with hindsight it can now be seen that the revolutionary was at war with the poet, and the poet won the war. This internal battle is chronicled in his autobiography, ***The Buried Day.*** It contains little on his detective fiction as Nicholas Blake, but it does recount the cause of his writing ***A Question of Proof,*** the first novel: a leaking roof. "We were told it would cost £100 to repair the roof properly. I could see no way of acquiring this sum honestly, until it occurred to me that I had read a vast number of detective novels and might be able to write one myself. I did so."[2] The first result was that he nearly lost his teaching position for using aspects of Cheltenham College for the setting, but the second and happier result was the novel's success, which allowed him to quit the teaching he did not en-

joy; in other words, the detective novels made the poet independent. In spite of the absence of detective fiction as such from ***The Buried Day,*** it is extremely valuable for understanding the reflections of the author's personality and the extensive use of his own experiences in his detective fiction. It has correctly been said that "the detective stories plainly have their source in the clear brain of the poet who can analyze his own complex thoughts and feelings in meticulous detail and unfold a metaphysical argument with persuasive lucidity and logic."[3] And it might be added that the pastoral lyricism that distinguishes his best poetry is also present in his fiction. Certainly, the novels would not be what they are if their author were not also a poet.

Blake was actively involved with the British Communist Party during the period he was writing his first four novels, and the first three reflect his left-wing political views of that time. (The only other one that could possibly be considered is the anti-fascist thriller ***The Smiler with the Knife,*** 1939, but even if it should be, it is clearly balanced by the anti-communist thriller ***The Sad Variety,*** 1964). What is most evident is that political statements are never made by Nigel Strangeways and rarely by the authorial voice; rather they are made by sympathetic lesser characters. Michael Evans, a young schoolmaster in ***A Question of Proof,*** looks at the crowd of parents visiting for Sports Day, and his thoughts are angry: "The spectacle of all this painted, feathered, complacent, chattering flock made him feel sick inside. It was to maintain this pretentious scum that millions sweated or starved beneath the surface" (27). He has similar thoughts throughout the novel. In the second, Sir John Strangeways, Assistant Commissioner of Police, says that he must dine with the Home Secretary, who has "suddenly developed Communist-phobia; thinks they're going to put a bomb under his bed. Ought to know they don't allow acts of individual violence" (***Shell*** [***Thou Shell of Death***], 17). ***There's Trouble Brewing,*** the third, has more such statements than the others. When a rich, penny-pinching brewer is found to be a murderer, a character says, "It's an interesting comment on our social system that a fellow like Burnett, whose whole life was a series of more or less legalised crimes, has to kill three people before we put him where he can't do any more mischief" (184), and a doctor gives a mini-lecture on the evils of the capitalistic system:

> His eyes seemed to be looking . . . into some vision of the future as he inveighed against social conditions—the under-nutrition of children throughout the industrial areas where he had first worked, the cynical way in which some employers of labour attempted to evade health regulations—"and you needn't go to the industrial areas to find that sort of thing. . . . For the price of a few battleships, we could give you a healthy nation. We have the knowledge, the skill, the material resources; but those in power prefer to use them for destroying their competitors and safe-guarding their own profits."
>
> (28)

To include such statements in British detective novels of the 1930s was daring, considering the genre's conservative outlook, but they are evidence of Blake's inclusion of his deeply held—if temporary—beliefs, and, in any case, they no longer seem obtrusive, only somewhat dated.

A major concern in ***The Buried Day*** is the meaning of the self and what the author calls "the clash of irreconcilables" which make and unmake a human being: old versus new, poetic versus political, private versus public, etc."[4] "I have called it the divided mind; but I am not a schizophrenic, only a man who tends to be victimised and activated, more than most perhaps, by inner conflict" (242). The resulting search for what he calls "single-mindedness" is a constant of his poetry and, accepting the autobiography, of his life. What is the relation to the detective novels? First is the sensitivity of characterization, especially in the repetition of the intensity and confusion of allegiances that passion brings. Second is the emphasis on the fear of schizophrenia. In novel after novel some suspect wonders if he might have committed the crime without knowing it because of a split personality. In one there is a true schizophrenic, in another a murderess attempts to become the person she has killed, and in six the murderer is insane. The divided mind may not be as significant to the Blake novels as to Day Lewis' poetry, but it is certainly present.

From the number of incidents, characters and places in the novels which can be identified as real in ***The Buried Day,*** the probability is that there are many more not mentioned, but, major or minor, those that can be identified show that as Day Lewis the poet used his experiences so did Blake the novelist. They can be as minor as his using the faculty-student hay-fights of Summer Fields school in ***A Question of Proof,*** his playing with his boat on the Round Pond of Kensington Garden as a child and using that as an opening for ***A Whisper in the Gloom,*** his introducing his classical scholarship into divergent characters of ***The Widow's Cruise,*** or his simply lifting his neighbor, Major-General Burton, who filled his hall with tiger heads and played Bach on a harpsichord wearing a fishing hat, and calling him General Shrivenham in ***The Beast Must Die.*** On the other hand, they can be as central in his placing ***Minute for Murder*** in the environment of his World War II work ("To have stood outside the war emotionally, even had it been possible, would have been to exile myself from my fellows and suffer, as exiles do, the worst impoverishment of all" [***Day*** [***The Buried Day***], 87]); placing

End of Chapter in the publishing firm of Wenham and Geraldine, he being a director of Chatto and Windus, and making that firm the publisher of ***The Buried Day***; his presenting his own Georgian home in Greenwich as the home of the victim in ***The Worm of Death***; or his sending Strangeways to Cabot University in New England to study a Herrick manuscript after his year as Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard.

Other instances could be cited, but nowhere is Blake's use of personal experience more telling than in his last and most intriguing novel, ***The Private Wound.*** It is intriguing for, if the murder is excluded, it is largely autobiographical. The story of a writer's affair in Ireland in 1939, it is obviously a fictional version of what is described as follows in ***The Buried Day***: "During this year, too, I was sowing my first wild oats—at the age of thirty-five—a shameless, half-savage, inordinate affair which taught me a great deal about women, and about myself, that I had never known. It seems, as I look back, all of a piece with the desperate irresponsibility and the fatalism which had been in the air since Munich" (230), and ten pages later is the comment: "During the ten years after 1940 . . . I was never long free from the sense of guilt."

Narrated by the central character, Dominic Eyre, an introspective, self-analyzing Anglo-Irishman, the plot recounts the intensity of his passion for Harriet Leeson—what he calls "the insolence of lust"—and recreates fictionally that similar experience of the author. Harriet's murder and the punishment for it exacted by her deceived husband, a "wrecked" hero of the Irish Republican wars, are interwoven with the love affair and with Irish religion, politics and culture to form an unconventional and disturbing work, both brutal and lyrical. The "Epilogue," supposedly written by Eyre's literary executor and explaining the finding of the manuscript after his death, is filled with suggestions that, though names have been changed, "something like this must really have happened":

> So it may well be, I reason, that although the events of the book are fictional, they represent some conflict, some authentic experience, which Dominic underwent in his thirties. The central relationship, between him and the woman he calls Harriet Leeson, may have developed in another part of Ireland, in England, or somewhere abroad for that matter. He would want to "distance" himself from the experience, in place as well as time.
>
> (223)

The Private Wound, Blake's valedictory to the detective novel, is his most personal and, for that reason, ultimately the most mysterious.

Also related to his being a poet are the many writers besides Eyre who appear in the novels. The most significant to the action are the poets Robert Seaton (***Head of a Traveler***) and Stephen Protheroe (***End of Chapter***), the novelists Felix Lane (***The Beast Must Die***) and Millicent Miles (***End of Chapter***), and the television dramatist Ned Stowe (***A Penknife in My Heart***), but there are a number of others who, though less important to the plot, give the works a "literary tone." One result is much conversation about writing, from the satiric to the thoroughly serious. The pseudo-intellectual Gertrude Amberley provides a kind of in-joke with her comment: "Auden and that lot have been dismissed long ago. . . . *Scrutiny* settled *their* hash long ago" (***Web*** [***A Tangled Web***], 59). More serious is ***Head of a Traveler,*** as much about the meaning of being a poet as it is about a murder. Crucial to the plot of ***End of Chapter*** is the drying up of a dynamic poet's talent, and it contains such literary criticism as Strangeways' agreeing with Keats that one quality of a great writer is "that negative capability which enables its possessor to take on the color of his environment, surrender himself to the personality of another" (105). Such comments may not add anything to murder and its investigation, but they do create a literate and literary tone, which is further developed in some of the novels by themes and motifs. These give their novels a depth of meaning beyond the mystery and serve as one of Blake's principal ways of structuring them. The theme of nemesis—in its most strict Greek mythological sense—in ***A Penknife in My Heart*** and the theme of mother-child relationships, plus the motif of repeated animal imagery in ***The Worm of Death,*** are two examples. Another is the macabrely comic motif of all sorts of heads and that of the mesmerizing lifelike house Plash Meadow—"ripe and bursting with the juice of human hopes, human graces and tragedies"—in ***Head of a Traveler*** (69).

The most striking example of Blake's use of a controlling theme is ***A Tangled Web,*** a novel which breaks most of the conventions of mystery fiction. It is a study of lust for power, betrayal and, above all, love, in which a murder happens to occur. The murderer, however, is not the villain; that role goes to his supposed best friend who betrays him to the police. That friend, Dr. John (Jacko) Jaques, is described by a police inspector as "*The only known specimen of a totally irresponsible man outside the loony bins*" (140). His determination to destroy the love between Hugo Chesterman and Daisy Bland is pathological:

> He did not hate Hugo, any more than a tarantula hates its natural prey. . . . No, the pleasure he now felt was unalloyed by hatred—the pure pleasure of power. . . . The sensation of controlling Hugo's destiny, and Daisy's, was almost physical. . . . Their love for each other, so ardent and exclusive, had always irked him; he felt an obscure need, not vindictive but dispassionately compulsive, to defile it—bring it down to his own level, as a hooligan may be driven to shatter a stained-

> glass window or a beautiful image, the mere existence of which he resents because it reproaches him with a kind of truth quite beyond his understanding.
>
> (138)

He succeeds, and Hugo is executed for killing a policeman during an attempted robbery. Yet the reader wishes Hugo to escape, for he is seen through the eyes of Daisy, the other person caught in Jacko's web. In her innocence, devotion and utter selflessness, she is "a creature out of a fable . . . a being from a legend, from a simpler, more luminous world where right and wrong had a different meaning and legal textbooks were unknown" (186, 187). The story is really hers—the original title was ***Death and Daisy Bland***—and the theme of "the burden of responsibility which true love inposes" (211) is exemplified by her in this most lyrical of Blake's novels.

Other structural elements that are evidence of Blake's being more than "just" a detective novelist are the management of point of view, the intertwining of action and explanation, and the "symmetrical" beginnings and endings. Only two of the novels are first-person narratives: ***The Deadly Joker*** and ***The Private Wound.*** The two narrators, John Waterson and Dominic Eyre, are quite different. As noted, Eyre is a tortured soul, revealing the most traumatic experience of his life, whereas Waterson could be described as a somewhat older Nigel Strangeways, and the tone is correspondingly lighter. Though the other eighteen novels are presented in the third person, several are largely written as if from the consciousness of one of the major characters: Paul Perry in ***Malice in Wonderland,*** Daisy Bland in ***A Tangled Web,*** Ned Stowe in ***A Penknife in My Heart*** and, to a lesser degree, Lucy Wragby in ***The Sad Variety.*** Since these four include a murderer, two "victims" and a "bystander," Blake's ability to manipulate point of view for characterization or suspense is obvious. In two other novels, he employs the diary of a character. The victim's diary provides an epilogue, affecting but unnecessary, to ***The Worm of Death.*** Much more impressive is "The Diary of Felix Lane," the first third of ***The Beast Must Die,*** a tour-de-force in misdirection, with its opening, blunt sentence: "I am going to kill a man." Blake also abruptly switches point of view, as in ***The Morning After Death,*** in which after focusing on Strangeways until the last chapter, he then switches to the murderer, with returns to Strangeways and jumps to the police to provide an exciting conclusion at a football game. Similar to this conclusion are those in which the final explanation is intertwined with action. Blake should have used this combination more often, for some of Strangeways' explanations are far too long. The confrontations between the two suspects in ***Minute for Murder*** and between Strangeways and a psychopathic murderer on a crumbling barge in ***The Worm of Death*** and the juxtaposing of Strangeways' explanation with a mob's chasing the murderer in ***The Dreadful Hollow*** are excellent illustrations of what can be done to prevent a tiresome lecture on whodunit and why. A third feature of Blake's structure is that whatever happens in the first few pages—rarely the murder—is much more important than it appears, and often the events or comments on these first pages return at the very end to create a symmetrical effect. The happening may seem totally unconnected to the plot as Strangeways and Clair Massinger's noticing "hysterical" swans in London on the first two pages of ***The Widow's Cruise,*** yet these swans provide a significant clue to a murder in Greece as explained in the last sentence of the novel. Without question, the best example of this symmetry of structure is ***A Penknife in My Heart,*** but to reveal its nature would be unfair to those yet to read it, for the symmetry is essential to both plot and theme.

As might be expected, the novels abound in literary quotations and allusions. Among the titles alone are included Shakespeare, Chaucer, Tourneur, Dryden, Scott, Carroll, Dickinson and Housman. (Blake is also particularly fond of connected or grammatically parallel chapter titles, using puns most wittily in ***Minute for Murder*** and ***End of Chapter*** and rime in ***The Widow's Cruise,*** whose chapters are "Embarkation," "Fraternization," "Annihilation," "Investigation" and "Elucidation.") A partial list of other poets alluded to or quoted from includes Vergil (in Latin), Wordsworth, Blake, Tennyson, Patmore, Baudelaire, Clough, Hardy, Eliot, Auden and Muir. The Bible, Ruskin's pathetic fallacy, Jane Austen, Henry James and a large number of American writers in ***The Morning After Death*** add to the list. Some of the quotations are important clues—Tourneur in ***Thou Shell of Death,*** Clough in ***Minute for Murder*** and Tennyson in ***The Dreadful Hollow***; others are simply a natural part of the mind of the poet-author, and they help to make the novels distinctively his.

Also helping is the detailed description which gives such a sense of place. From many examples, the one that is most evidently close to the author occurs in ***The Worm of Death.*** The presentation of the Thames around Greenwich and the use of Blake's own home as the home of the victim provide a realized setting without detracting from the action. (The same feeling for the area is expressed in ***The Buried Day,*** 239.) Throughout the novels, a love of place, a love of England, is always present, understandable from a writer who celebrates it so often in his poetry. Related is his ability to differentiate the speech of his characters. Although in the early novels he can sound, fortunately rarely, as if unconsciously parodying Dorothy L. Sayers—"the utter caliginous inspissated fog in his own mind" (***Shell***, 87)—his ability to reproduce psychoanalytic and academic jargon, the American-learned English of a Greek cruise-manager, the dialect of Irish peasants or rural Dorset

boys, and the solecisms of "the Martini-and-smoked-salmon brigade," such as "for my wife and I" (***Worm*** [***The Worm of Death***], 95, 96), proves that Blake has the ear of someone who pays attention to language, to the poetry of the human voice.

No consideration of the novels' relationship to their author's being a poet would be complete without some notice of the figures of speech which are so prevalent. There are so many that the only conclusion is they, if nothing else, would justify the author as a poet. The repeated use of them for characterization is evident in ***End of Chapter,*** where Stephen Protheroe is "fishlike" or "minnowy" and Arthur Geraldine's mouth is always "sharklike."

But figures of speech are not just for characterization; they can describe action in an unexpected but exact way, as in the first love-making of ***A Tangled Web***; "She felt impaled, powerless yet wildly acquiescent. He was a stranger, he was a hawk hovering to swoop down upon her. They came together as if whirled by a clap of wind out of a cloudless sky. She was naked, staring up at him transfixed, an animal in a snare shamming dead under the poacher's hands, then quivering and struggling" (18). Rather than try to describe Blake's figures of speech, I prefer to present ten, chosen with difficulty from dozens:

> Pride: "the white elephant of the emotions, very imposing and expensive, and the sooner one can get rid of it, the better."
>
> (***Beast*** [***The Beast Must Die***], 149)

> "he swarms with ideas, you know, like lice."
>
> (***Chapter*** [***End of Chapter***], 140)

> "Out at the sea's edge a flock of terns flashed and gyrated, like a mobile gone mad."
>
> (***Wound*** [***The Private Wound***], 51)

> "Her white fists lay beside her like tear-soaked, crumpled handkerchiefs."
>
> (***Head*** [***Head of a Traveler***], 148)

> "the man's never been nearer Scotland than the end of a whiskey bottle."
>
> (***Cruise*** [***The Widow's Cruise***], 85)

> "Faulkner in Mississippi, absorbedly tracing the history of one small region, like a lover feeling along the contours of his mistress's face."
>
> (***Morning*** [***The Morning After Death***], 118)

> "It was the kind of country town which goes into a coma between its weekly markets. . . . An exanimate group of village housewives stood at the bus stop, in the patient attitudes of the dead awaiting Charon's ferry."
>
> (***Hollow*** [***The Dreadful Hollow***], 105)

> "he seemed to carry his personality with gingerly caution, as if it were a priceless vase."
>
> (***Morning*** [***The Morning After Death***], 63)

> "I felt the fine Irish rain, which always seems to have been poured through holes, infinitesimal in diameter, of the rose of a celestial watering can; threads of rain, all but invisible, which alight on one's face with the touch of spider-web filaments."
>
> (***Wound***, 85)

> Of a swan: "It looks like an Edwardian hat trying to walk."
>
> (***Cruise***, 2)

C. Day Lewis was a critic, editor, translator and *poet.* Nicholas Blake was a detective novelist. They were one man, and the detective novelist cannot be separated from the poet; or perhaps since he so often has been, one can only say he should not be.

The Detective Novelist as Detective Novelist

> *". . . tell me, do you read detective fiction?"*
>
> *"Sometimes," said Nigel.*
>
> *"I hope you are sound on it."*
>
> *"Sound?" asked Nigel.*
>
> *"As an art form."*
>
> *"It's not an art form. It's an entertainment."*
>
> *. . . "Excellent, I have no use for those who seek to turn the crime novel into an exercise in morbid psychology . . . [Crime novelists today have] lost the courage of their own agreeable fantasies, and want to be accepted as serious writers." . . .*
>
> *"Still, novels that are all plot—just clever patterns concealing a vacuum—one does get bored with them."*
>
> (***Morning,*** 17)

Though such byplay is amusing, it seems to reflect Blake's own views of detective fiction, for it differs little from the Introduction he wrote to the English edition of Howard Haycraft's *Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Detective Story* (1942), which states some of his principal ideas about the genre more seriously.[5] Blake describes detective fiction as the "the Folk-Myth of the Twentieth Century," with the detective as fairy godmother. Since he believes that guilt is present in all of us and that the force of religion has weakened for most, detective fiction offers a substitute for religious ritual in harmlessly releasing or absolving that sense of guilt. It is in this "fantasy-representation of guilt" that the value of detective fiction lies, but the fantasy is of equal importance: "evil must, both for myth-making and entertainment, be volatised by a certain measure of fantasy." He sees two possible ways of achieving the "fantasy-representation of guilt": the au-

thor may put unreal characters into realistic situations, as in the *roman policier,* or "'real' characters in unreal, fantastic, or at least improbable situations." He cites as examples of the latter method the works of John Dickson Carr, Rex Stout, Ngaio Marsh and Michael Innes and, from the context, obviously his own.

Blake's novels may be categorized in various ways. Most obviously, there are sixteen Nigel Strangeways novels and four without him, but more is indicated about their nature if they are divided by type; on that basis the grouping is fourteen detective novels, the only one without Strangeways being ***The Deadly Joker,*** where he is replaced by the similar John Waterson; three thrillers: ***The Smiler with the Knife, The Whisper in the Gloom*** and ***The Sad Variety,*** all with Strangeways; and three crime novels, as defined by Julian Symons, in which the lives and psychology of the characters are central: ***A Tangled Web, A Penknife in My Heart*** and ***The Private Wound,*** none with Strangeways.

The fourteen detective novels are not widely different in technique from those of Blake's colleagues from the thirties to the sixties, except for the, to be considered, continual emphasis upon the past's effect upon the present. They contain such often repeated conventions as crimes other than murder to complicate the investigation (blackmail, possible treason, poison-pen letters), snowed-in country houses, time problems, body substitutions, public and bizarre murders (hydrocyanic acid inserted into a walnut shell, boiling in a vat of beer, prussic acid inhaled from a "trick" flower), red herrings (binoculars with spiked eyepieces, a *Playboy* centerfold, removal of a corpse by someone other than the murderer), long final explanations (on a few occasions, too long), a small number of suspects, and foreshadowings of what is to come (even versions of the Had-I-But-Known convention: "Had he gone to investigate that moment, it is just possible that the course of several people's lives might have been profoundly altered" [***Beast,*** 179]). Occasionally novels contain coincidences or improbabilities, but there are more in the thrillers than the detective novels. On the other hand, Blake can play with conventions. ***Malice in Wonderland*** is a comic mystery in which the only death is that of a German spy toward the end of the novel. His use of themes and motifs for structural purposes has already been discussed, and to be considered later is what might be called the "if" technique, which consists of Strangeways spending several pages going over in his mind all possible solutions, what is described as "spinning theories out of thin air" (***Morning,*** 55). After he has indulged in one of these speculative sessions, the reader is hopelessly confused. One structural theme repeated so often as to be distinctively Blake's is the effect of the past on the present. Seen at its best in ***Thou Shell of Death, End of Chapter,*** and ***The Worm of Death,*** it involves Strangeways in exploring the past and revealing some buried secret which is the motive for murder. Usually the secret is a part of a family's history, and the search for it opens wounds and causes tensions within that family. Whether an illegitimate child, a girl's suicide, the neglect of a mother, or the loss of a lover, the event of the past returns after years to precipitate murder. Revenge and/or insanity are nearly always directly related, and in some cases the murder is ritualistic or a form of "poetic justice" paralleling what happened in the past—another instance of Blake's fondness for "symmetry."

The three thrillers are, in my opinion, lesser works. ***The Smiler with the Knife*** is fun with all its action, and the same is true of ***The Whisper in the Gloom,*** although it contains more coincidence than any other Blake novel, so much that it is commented upon within the novel. ***The Sad Variety*** is the weakest; an inverted work dealing with the saving of a kidnapped girl, it is unwieldly from attempting to include too many disparate and incompatible elements. Far superior are the three crime novels. Enough has already been said of ***A Tangled Web*** and ***The Private Wound,*** except to note that the first is based, as far as plot is concerned, upon the killing of a policeman by John Williams, "the Hooded Man," in 1912; Blake moves the time to the 1950s, and the characterization of the three major characters is all his. ***A Penknife in My Heart,*** the third, coincidentally has essentially the same premise as Patricia Highsmith's *Strangers on a Train,* relating two men's agreement to commit murders for each other and the nemesis which overtakes them in the form of the guilt and gradual self-understanding of one of them. It is Blake's most ironic novel—with irony in all its forms—and, though difficult to discuss without "spoiling" it, deserves to be better known.

In spite of the differences between the detective novels, the thrillers, and the crime novels, certain characteristic Blake elements are found in all three; these include chases, melodramatic action and comedy and comic set-pieces. (One might expect romance to be on the list, but it is not. It is very much present, unhappily so, in the three crime novels and takes various forms in the detective novels—again unhappy, motivative, conventional, as red herring, or quite complex in ***The Deadly Joker***—but it is absent from the thrillers.) The first novel, ***A Question of Proof,*** includes a wildly comic car chase, and the following ***Thou Shell of Death*** goes one better with an airplane chase, ending in a death. The last half of ***The Smiler with the Knife*** is nothing but chase, and other novels include briefer episodes in which the chase of a suspect or murderer is a plot device. Most often, these occur at the end of a novel to give it a slambang finish. Whether the search for an assassin in the Royal Albert Hall—one immediately thinks of Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (***Gloom*** [***The Whisper in the Gloom***]), a murderer's attempt to es-

cape at a New England college football game (***Morning***), the attack by tractor on a kidnap cottage (***Variety*** [***The Sad Variety***]), or others, these chases are one aspect of Blake's penchant for melodrama. He is not afraid to present action that would not normally be included in classical British detective fiction. There is even a ledge-hanging episode in ***Minute for Murder.*** The melodrama is sometimes comic, as in the battle of Portobello Road and the shoot-out at a stately home in ***The Whisper in the Gloom,*** but it can also be physically brutal, minor as in the hanging of a puppy (***Joker*** [***The Deadly Joker***]) or major as in the final confrontation between the detective and murderer (***Worm***), as well as psychologically brutal as in the confrontation of the two suspects in ***Minute for Murder,*** which is called "a pretty naked exhibition of mutual antipathy" (234). The comedy can also be brutal; for example, the "fun" of a dog named Truffles being boiled in a beer vat or the "hilarious" questioning of a half-wit dwarf by a police inspector. However, most of the comedy is not brutal. Strangeways can have puckish ideas—"an insane desire to be able to produce a live mouse out of his breast pocket, with the immortal Boy Scout alacrity of Harpo Marx" (***Shell,*** 154)—or the pretensions of psychoanalysis can be mocked through the precocious child of two practitioners (***Cruise***).

Also, the novels contain numerous comic set-pieces, some extraneous to the plot but all contributing to the distinctive tone that is Blake's. The "surrealist" interior of Mr. Sorn's room in ***There's Trouble Brewing,*** the "peace" meeting in ***The Whisper in the Gloom,*** the Greek cafe scene in ***The Widow's Cruise,*** the "Initiation of a Detective" in ***A Question of Proof,*** and "The Old Nurse's Tale" chapter of ***Thou Shell of Death*** are a few such set-pieces representative of the gentle, if rather wacky, comedy of the novels.

A specific way in which Blake differs from other British detective novelists of his generation or earlier is the large number of children and teenagers who appear in his work. How many children play even minor roles in the works of the other eleven writers in this volume or in the works of Sayers, Christie or Marsh? In nine novels, young people are conspicuously present, though some are more important than others. The schoolboys who provide the background of ***A Question of Proof*** and show Blake's understanding of boyish fantasies; the information-supplying rural Dorset boys of ***There's Trouble Brewing,*** and the delightful John and Priscilla Restorick, the precocious children of ***The Corpse in the Snowman,*** who trade slang and quips with each other, using such expressions as "spotted pard" and "infant cheeild," may not be absolutely necessary, but they would be missed. The same is true of such teenagers as Sally Thistlewaite, the comic love interest of ***Malice in Wonderland*** or the emotionally troubled twins Peter and Faith Trubody of ***The Widow's Cruise.*** On the other hand, children are murder victims in ***The Sad Variety*** and ***The Widow's Cruise,*** and in ***The Beast Must Die,*** a child hit-and-run victim is the motivation for all that happens. In the same novel, another child greatly complicates the plot for both murderer and detective. Finally, in two of the thrillers children are central to the action. In ***The Whisper in the Gloom*** Bert Hale, aged twelve, and his friends, Copper and Foxy, become involved in an assassination attempt on a visiting Soviet minister. Bert is a scientific "brain" and Foxy is streetwise; together they are the equal of the Hardy boys. Though they undergo considerable danger, they thoroughly enjoy the excitement of their adventures: witnessing a murder, being kidnapped, hiding in secret rooms and riding in helicopters. Adult peril becomes boyish fun in this rather improbable, but comic, novel. (Walt Disney modernized and Americanized it as *The Kids Who Knew Too Much.*) Lucy Wragsby of ***The Sad Variety*** is another child of twelve; she is kidnapped by communists to obtain a formula from her scientist father. She is incredibly calm during her ordeal, and her intelligence enables her to get a message to the outside. At the same time, she is so appealing that her tough female captor, a woman whose "mental world was one of abstractions, slogans, diagrams, statistics" (13), succumbs to her charm and attempts to prevent her death. As unlikely as the ability of these children to survive their perils may seem, they are still children in their emotions, fears, superstitions and infectious innocent acceptance of their adventures. They are examples of that negative capability so admired by their creator.

Other characters include typical stereotypes such as the suspects listed by Georgia Strangeways in ***The Corpse in the Snowman***: "A trollop, an Ango-Saxon squire, an American wife, a rolling stone, a fribble, and a quack" (18). Witty tramps, boorish interlopers into village life, faithful retainers, pompous teachers, dull doctors, flirts, spinsters, and all sorts of people acting guilty for personal reasons—the well-known types of Golden Age detective fiction are present. In essence, they are little different from hundreds of characters created by other writers. Yet Blake rarely resorts to exaggerated eccentricity; rather his subsidiary characters are carefully delineated to serve their functions as witnesses and suspects. And occasionally, they are original, amusing or horrible enough to remain memorable: Mr. Thistlewaite, an imposing Oxford tailor who reads detective fiction (***Malice*** [***Malice in Wonderland***]), Clarissa Cavendish, who lives in her private eighteenth-century world (***Shell***), Mrs.Hale, the roly-poly but acerbic wife of a bishop (***Cruise***), Daniel Durdle, a caterpillar-like Puritan who writes poison-pen letters (***Hollow***), Charles Reilly, a poet in residence at an American university, who seems an elderly Irish reincarnation of Dylan Thomas (***Morning***), or priggish but likeable Paul Perry, a "mass observer," who is a satiric portrait of a young leftist just before World War II (***Malice***). Together the

stereotypes and the originals provide a colorful supporting cast for the duel between murderer and detective or the action of the thrillers.

Most of Blake's victims follow the unknown or unpleasant convention so that the reader feels little sorrow, the major exceptions being the multi-viewed Nita Prince (***Minute*** [***Minute for Murder***]), the beautiful and gentle Vera Paston (***Joker***), and most especially the pathetic little boy called Evan, who is left to die in a blizzard (***Variety***). Some victims are never seen or appear only for their murder, while others range from simply obnoxious, Millicent Miles (***Chapter***), to the absolutely evil, Dr. Dennis Bogan (***Corpse*** [***The Corpse in the Snowman***]) and George Rattery (***Beast***). Like most of his colleagues, Blake does not make the victim the most interesting character in a novel, the only possible exception being Harriet Leeson in ***The Private Wound,*** who is a third of a triangle with her husband and Dominic Eyre; she is at least as interesting as they because of her sexual nature and the deep love both men have for her, but even she is less complex than her murderer.

In ***The Buried Day,*** Blake states, "As a writer of detective novels, I am interested in the criminal mind," and he lists three characteristics of that mind: "unreality, fatalism and unconscious need for punishment" (47). This interest is evident in the principal motives of his murderers: fear, revenge, sexual repression and insanity. The term most often used to describe the weakness of a murderer is "moral cowardice," the inability to face life as it is. What seems to fascinate Blake most is the point at which a person's fantasy of murder changes to the determination to commit the act, for most people somehow suppress any such fantasies. This flashpoint is discussed in ***The Widow's Cruise*** (177), ***The Dreadful Hollow*** (243) and ***The Morning After Death*** (170), but the most concise statement is in ***Head of a Traveller***: "The chap who plans a murder never really means to commit it. Generally he never gets further than the planning: there must be thousands of murders committed in fantasy every year. But just now and then the point is reached where the fantasies take charge and push the bloke over the edge" (166).

Just as the flashpoint is different for different people, so are the personalities of murderers. Blake's vary from one who is "Maiden aunt, St. Francis, intrepid aviator; tender, reckless, fussy, Rabelaisian, ruthless" (***Shell,*** 31) to a vain "buccaneer" with "no best to bring out," "to whom unexpected obstacles come as a personal affront" (***Penknife*** [***A Penknife in My Heart***], 75, 93) to the one in ***The Beast Must Die*** who has "a too sensitive conscience" and sees the tragic irony of the situation—but all are flawed with "moral cowardice." As a result of Blake's desire to study the psychology of his murderers, they are often rather obvious or are revealed earlier than usual. ***The Deadly Joker, The Widow's Cruise*** and ***The Worm of Death*** provide three examples. Another is in ***End of Chapter,*** and there Blake uses his most popular means of misdirecting the reader from the obvious, one could say only possible, suspect: Nigel Strangeways' liking or admiring the murderer. This device is used in five of the Strangeways novels: ***Thou Shell of Death, The Beast Must Die, The Corpse in the Snowman, Minute for Murder*** and ***End of Chapter.*** (The "liking" of the murderer is also used in the three crime novels; in ***The Private Wound,*** Eyre repeatedly expresses his admiration for the person who is revealed as the murderer and afterwards says that he "remains a tragic figure for me" [213].) His friendship with the murderer in ***The Beast Must Die*** causes Strangeways to call the results, "my most unhappy case" (218), and the ending of ***Head of a Traveler*** is left open with Strangeways undecided as to revealing the murderer because of his admiration for a relation of that murderer. Such sympathy is, needless to say, unusual in detective fiction, for it could easily skew the thematic formula of freeing a society from the suspicion of guilt and eliminating the one responsible, but Blake is able to hold to that formula while still exhibiting the sympathy. One way he does this—and tied to plot—is the final disposition of the murderers. A list is informative:

Suicide	7	(Proof [*A Question of Proof*], Shell, Beast, Chapter, Penknife, Cruise, Morning)
Death by others	4	(Hollow, Worm, Variety, Wound)
Arrest	4	(Trouble [*There's Trouble Brewing*], Minute, Gloom, Joker)
Execution	1	(Web)
Insanity	1	(Smiler [*The Smiler With the Knife*])
Freedom (no murder occurs)	1	(Malice)
Escape (to spy for England)	1	(Corpse)
Undecided	1	(Head)

As can be seen, suicide or death by others accounts for over half the murderers' exits from the novels. Only one of those Strangeways likes is arrested, and the suicides in ***A Question of Proof*** and ***The Beast Must Die*** are the direct results of his pity or friendship for the murderers. Some of the suicides are spectacular and are one form of those slambang endings, but even more the suicides and a number of the other exits are revelatory of their author's own nature as a human being. In only two instances does the murderer apparently escape some "punishment," yet the novels are unique in the amount of sympathy the murderers receive from the detective or the narrative voice. Blake's interest in the "why" of the criminal mind and his innate sense of compassion, so evident in his poetry, are the obvious reasons.

Blake has been quoted as saying that when he decided to write his first detective novel he had already read "a vast number." His works prove that he had: that he knew the conventions and formulas and accepted most of them. He used them skillfully, combining them with his personal and poetic interests, to create twenty novels, among which are some of the classics of the genre.

THE POET AS DETECTIVE

> *"What do you think an amateur detective ought to look like?"*
>
> * * *
>
> *"Well, I suppose my idea of a detective is based on Sherlock Holmes, Father Brown and Poirot."*
>
> *"A curious composite figure he must be! Long and short, fat and thin—"*
>
> *"Now don't interrupt. He has piercing eyes, that see exactly what you are thinking. He is always making sinister deductions from one's most innocent remarks. And of course he's wildly eccentric. Are you wildly eccentric?"*
>
> *"It's very difficult: some of my friends complain that I'm too eccentric, others that I'm not eccentric enough."*
>
> *"You look quite ordinary to me."*
>
> (***Trouble,*** 14-15)

Though Nigel Strangeways may seem quite ordinary, an effect he often plays up, he is really in the tradition of the brilliant amateur sleuth. Blake consciously based him on his close friend and fellow poet, W.H. Auden, as Auden has noted, "I must confess to a weakness for Mr. Day Lewis's Nigel Strangeways, because some of his habits were taken from mine."[6] It is also evident from ***The Buried Day*** that much of the author's own personality, particularly his compassion and introspection, and appearance are present in his detective.[7] Blake chose not to make Strangeways a poet as such, but he does "dabble," his word, in literature. He has written a couple of "charming" books, including a "delightful little book on the Caroline poets" (***Trouble,*** 10). In ***The Smiler with the Knife,*** he is translating Hesiod and has a flat in literary Bloomsbury, and in ***Head of a Traveler*** is writing a "monograph on the subject of graphology in relation to the manuscripts of certain twentieth-century poets" (18). With his Audenesque genesis, his traits in common with his poet-creator, and his literary manner, it is not much of an exaggeration to use "the poet as detective" to characterize Nigel Strangeways.

He does not age appreciably. He is said to be in his early thirties in ***Malice in Wonderland,*** and that is the general impression throughout the novels. An untidy, stooped six-footer, who sprawls or strides like an ostrich, he looks a little flabby but is not. His face is furrowed, but "the childlike pout of his underlip" (***Smiler*** [***The Smiler with the Knife***], 5) combined with his shortsighted, pale-blue eyes, sometimes behind thick glasses, and his "lock of sandy-coloured hair dropping over his forehead" (***Shell,*** 11) give him a boyish expression. Though he can be brutal when angry, he most often gives the deceptive impression of naivete: "Nigel's pale-blue eyes held an expression of guilelessness; which had been misinterpreted by many and had been the downfall of some" (***Morning,*** 53). His docile air hides an inordinate curiosity: "the passionate interest in human nature which precluded any taking offense at its more offensive manifestations" (***Hollow,*** 5). His ability to mask his curiosity behind apparent docility is naturally one of his greatest assets as a detective. Occasionally, the underlying keenness of mind shows through the mask; for instance, when he is thinking hard, he stares ruminatively down his nose, but his eyes can at any moment "narrow and spark into the most concentrated attention" (***Smiler,*** 5). But the overall effect is an "air of purposeful abstraction," suggesting "a lecturer of the less orthodox academic type" (***Cruise,*** 105).

Like most British "great detectives," Strangeways is given qualities which prevent his being too forbiddingly superior, and again like those of the others, they are comic qualities of personality. In only one novel do they become obtrusive; in ***There's Trouble Brewing*** Strangeways very facetiously plays the great detective. There is altogether too much of "We must visit the scene of the crime. This is big stuff. Noted amateur bloodhound follows up the Clue of the Sabotaged Bell" (113). Fortunately, Blake curbed the extravagance, but that is not to say that Strangeways does not succumb to the everpresent temptation to show off. During a high-speed car chase, he can say it is better than the movies and break into an aria from *Israel in Egypt.* The comment is made in ***The Beast Must Die*** that he is "never above a nice piece of exhibitionism" (114), and that is especially true of his final explanations. On the other hand, he shuns publicity: his exhibitionism is for the small group, not the public. The greatest display of it is in verbal humor, which can range from his teasing his wife about her travel books with the suggested title, *Three Thousand Miles Through the Bush on a Tricycle,* to the twenty-two nonsense questions he devises in ***The Beast Must Die.*** Two examples are "How many stitches in time save ten?" and "How many lives has a cat o' nine tails?" His wife's comment after examining the list is "It must be a terrible thing to have received the benefits of a classical education," which leads to a sparring match about *llamas* and *lamas* (104-05). Since we learn that Strangeways did not take his studies seriously, perhaps that classical education is not responsible. In any case, he is excessively fond of puns and mixed metaphors. His best literary pun is "Marihuana of the Moated Grange" (***Morning,*** 60). His fondness for such mixed metaphors as "his pre-war wild oats come home to roost" causes his uncle to groan, but Strangeways says

that "they are signs of a vivid and proleptic imagination" (***Shell,*** 16, 187). Proleptic or not, Strangeways does have a vivid imagination. One of his jokes with Inspector Blount in ***Thou Shell of Death*** concerning possible murderers can serve as an illustration of that imagination and Blake's ability to give his detective a quirky humor that makes him as amusing as formidable:

> What about the gardener, then? Name of Jeremiah Pegrum: and a name like that should lead one into the worst excesses. Spends most of his time meditating in the outhouses, but you've only to read T.F. Powys to discover that murder is the chief winter sport amongst English rustics. "The long winter evenings are coming. Buy a set of our guaranteed ever-sharp hatchets. It will keep young and old amused. Packed in fancy box, with directions, seven shillings and sixpence net. Packets of assorted hemlock, ratsbane, henbane and deadly nightshade, sixpence extra."
>
> (125)

Other comic aspects of his personality are his love of "blankets for three" on his bed and his enormous appetite, from tea-drinking in the first novel to eating American corn muffins in the last. Amazingly, since he hates to exercise, he never gains weight. As a final eccentricity, he likes American football—for the majorettes.

There are two women in Strangeways' life: Georgia Cavendish, who becomes his wife, and later Clare Massinger, who becomes his lover. They provide a way of roughly dividing the sixteen Strangeways novels into three chronological groups. Seven were written between 1935 and 1941, the last six of which might be called the "Georgia" novels. As Blake was working for the Ministry of Information during World War II, no other novel appeared until 1947. Of the nine written between then and 1966, the first three present Strangeways mourning Georgia's death, while in the last six his affair with Clare Massinger is a major element, and they can be termed the "Clare" novels.

Georgia Cavendish is "one of the three most famous woman explorers of her day" (***Beast,*** 107). When she first appears in ***Thou Shell of Death,*** she is accompanied by a parrot and a bloodhound and is described as "attractively ugly, eccentric without being a frump, witty, a good cook, sensible and sensual, faithful, and a perfect seat—I am told—on anything from an armadillo to a camel" (70). Having been everywhere from the Sahara to the outer Hebrides, she is a competent, liberated woman. Like Harriet Vane before Wimsey, she has had an affair before meeting Strangeways, and like Lord Peter he is not bothered by that as much as saving her from a murder charge, which he does. In the next novel, they are married, Blake not following Sayers in tracing the romance. Strangeways discusses his cases with her, receiving helpful insights and suggestions, and uses her, in his own words, as an *agent provocateuse*; the same is true of his later relationship with Clare. In ***The Smiler with the Knife*** Georgia is the central character. She and Strangeways fake a separation so that she may infiltrate a fascist conspiracy and attract its leader: Strangeways is absent from most of the novel. ***The Smiler with the Knife*** is a thriller in which the leader of the conspiracy is revealed in the first half of the narrative. That half is quite effective in reflecting the social and political unrest in Great Britain just before World War II, but the second half is almost a parody of the thriller, with a cricket-playing martyr destroying himself and the conspirators' underground bomb factory, causing "the Nottingham earthquake," and Georgia's undergoing a hyperbolic chase-and-escape sequence. She obtains the plans of the conspiracy, is caught, sets a fire and blinds the villain, disguises herself as Father Christmas (Santa Claus), endures a chase in a huge truck, disguises herself again as a eurythmic dancer, and finally has to fight the blind villain in a totally dark room. Along the way, she has some delightfully comic helpers: Mr. Dickon, a Strangewayish department store manager who provides her escape from Manchester; and Miss Lobelia Agg-Thoresby and her Radiance Girls, the eurythmic group, which takes her in. Though Blake seems unable to decide exactly what he wants the novel to be, it is great fun, and notable as Georgia's only starring role.[8]

She is killed by a bomb while driving an ambulance during the London blitz. Her death is announced and the effect on Strangeways stated in ***Minute for Murder***:

> Georgia's death had left him mentally crippled. . . . His lack of interest in the personal relationships of his colleagues—this, he realized now, was because he could not come home and talk to her about them. Georgia had helped him in so many of his cases, bringing her keen intuitive power to bear upon the facts and hints he collected. To become involved in a case again would be to remind himself at every step of how much he had lost.
>
> (55)

After the interregnum of three novels, Clare Massinger enters in ***The Whisper in the Gloom.*** She is a famous sculptor at twenty-six, who "doodles" by shaping spout-muzzled little horses. Although she has supposedly known Strangeways four years, she only learns that he is a detective in this novel, an unnecessarily improbable situation. She is cat-like in appearance: thin with a dead-pale face and coal-black hair. Strangeways finds her even more untidy than himself and thinks, "I could never cohabit with a woman who keeps an open pot of foi gras on a shelf next to an open tin of turpentine" (***Chapter,*** 71). However, they do eventually cohabit, but without marriage. The choice is hers, as Strangeways explains in ***The Worm of Death***:

> We live together. But Clare is tremendously old-fashioned. She believes that marriage is for the procreation of children and the raising of families. And her

> lifework is making her children out of stone and wood. She simply couldn't divide her attention between them and real ones. So we've never married. But it's all very respectable.
>
> (4)

(In ***The Morning After Death,*** the last Strangeways novel, he is unfaithful to Clare with an American graduate student. My students in a seminar on detective fiction found this "shocking conduct" for a great detective. Perhaps his unfaithfulness is a way of emphasizing the *respectability* of the relationship with Clare.) Being a sculptor, Clare has great powers of observation, and, like Georgia, she is a sounding board for Strangeways' theories and is used by him as decoy and information-gatherer or, in her own angry words, "as a cross between a tethered goat and a call girl" (***Gloom,*** 170). But her most significant actions are her saving Strangeways' life in three of the six novels: ***The Whisper in the Gloom, End of Chapter,*** and ***The Worm of Death***—in the last of these, she hangs the murderer! In spite of the novels having been written between 1954 and 1966, this reversal of stereotypical male-female roles—he never rescues *her,* along with the refusal to marry, gives their relationship a very contemporary tone.

The two policemen with whom Strangeways works most often are Inspector, later Superintendent, Blount and Inspector Wright. Blount appears in six novels, and in the last of these, ***The Whisper in the Gloom,*** introduces Strangeways to Wright, who then returns in two more. Blount is a bald, dryly courteous Scotsman, who has "rather impersonal eyes" and who can bully witnesses if necessary, but whose principal method of gaining information is to present a Pickwickian exterior, which Strangeways knows camouflages "a mind as ruthlessly purposeful as a guided missile" (***Hollow,*** 149). Repeatedly such phrases as "that bland-faced, granite-hearted Scot" (***Beast,*** 113) or "Bloody old serpent in hen's clothing" (Hollow, 168) are used to describe his deceptive appearance and what it masks. In their deceptiveness Blount and Strangeways are brothers. Blount's favorite phrase is "bricks without straw," most often applied to Strangeways' ideas, for, though somewhat of an over-simplification, their essential working relationship is Blount for facts and Strangeways for theories. There is typical jovial byplay between them, but they work well together, their specialities complimenting each other. In fact, Strangeways always works well with the police, though he occasionally employs them for their information in ways they do not anticipate. Both Blount and Wright are usually ahead of him in considering physical evidence—***The Worm of Death*** providing several instances—and he generally leaves that aspect of a case to them. Wright seems somehow more "professional" than Blount, and his sternness is emphasized by his saturnine hatchet-face and eyes "sharp as augers." But as with Blount, he and Strangeways work together. When Strangeways feels he must withhold information from Wright, he agonizes, "To lie to his old friend Wright was unthinkable" (***Worm,*** 201). All in all, though Strangeways is the solver of the mutual cases, he and his official colleagues are friends and work without acrimony; there is no Holmes-Lestrade or Poirot-Japp belittling of Scotland Yard in these novels.

One of Wright's facetious comments about Strangeways is "The mad archeologist. Loves digging up the past" (***Worm,*** 69). As noted in the previous section, Strangeways does spend much time delving into the past, but as a detective he does more. Other characters are continually fascinated by his reasons for being a detective. In ***A Question of Proof*** one of his friends says that he left Oxford after two years, as a result of answering his examination questions in limericks, and "settled down to investigate crime; said it was the only career left which offered scope to good manners and scientific curiosity. He's been very successful; made pots of money" (93). Strangeways always mentions that he is paid—and paid well—for his detection. He states in ***There's Trouble Brewing*** that "Twenty-five guineas retaining fee, and a refresher of five guineas a day is my minimum charge" (25). Of course, the answer of money does not satisfy his questioners, and so he has to explain:

> "But *why* do you do it?" he asked.
>
> "Criminal investigation, you mean? . . . It's chiefly that I'm curious about people—particularly the pathological states of mind . . . Also, it's just as well that murderers shouldn't be allowed to indulge in their pastime. . . . I charge high fees."
>
> (***Worm***, 11)

In ***Malice in Wonderland,*** he gives one of the classic statements about detection—at least fictional detection: "I don't hire myself out to prove any one's innocence. I do it to discover the truth" (143). His longest statement of his reasons occurs in ***There's Trouble Brewing*** and is basically an explanation of the intellectual satisfaction he receives from solving a case, using the analogy of translating Latin to criminal detection:

> You have a long sentence, full of inversions; just a jumble of words it looks at first. That is what a crime looks like at first sight, too. The subject is a murdered man; the verb is the modus operandi, the way the crime was committed; the object is the motive. Those are the three essentials of every sentence and every crime. First you find the subject, then you look for the verb, and the two of them lead you to the object. But you have not discovered the criminal—the meaning of the whole sentence yet. There are a number of subordinate clauses, which may be clues or red-herrings, and you've got to separate them from each other in your own mind and reconstruct them to fit and to amplify the meaning of the whole. It's an exercise in analysis and synthesis. . . .
>
> (52-53)

Such a philosophy of detection places great demands on the person attempting to practice it. Nigel Strangeways possesses a number of qualities which enable him to do just that and which make him one of the great detectives. He is "a kind of human microscope" as a result of what he calls his "trained, scientific curiosity" and his "almost perfect verbal memory" (***Proof,*** 100: ***Shell,*** 160). Other well-established characteristics are his lack of intimidation by the rich or powerful and his refusal to be bound by official rules: "Etiquette and convention meant nothing to him, when a problem had arisen which could only be solved by unorthodox methods" (***Hollow,*** 218). Yet he can have great compassion—even for murderers. He is a firm believer in the use of shock tactics; his favorite expression is some variation of "I think it's time I put a cat among the pigeons" (***Worm,*** 153; see also ***Variety,*** 47 & ***Morning,*** 83). He enjoys the consternation among suspects when he introduces some ambiguous remark or supposed discovery, for their reactions often reveal more than they intend. Such tactics are another instance of his exhibitionism, as are those long, drawn-out final explanations.

All of these characteristics aid his success, but the principal component of that success is his ability to reason. Like other detectives, he makes lists, especially of what he finds anomalous, and then his mind ranges over them to resolve the anomalies. He states in the first novel, "My clues are of the invisible, intangible sort" (164). Therefore, he leaves physical evidence to the police and theorizes, reasons, *thinks.* In nearly every novel there is a three to five page section in which he considers all the questions of the case and all possible solutions. Though Strangeways' head may become dizzy from his "tail-chasing arguments," the reader's becomes even more so, which is Blake's intent. The possibilities are so logical and yet so confusing by their number that the reader can only wait for Strangeways to identify the correct solution at the end.

In Strangeways Blake neatly balances the normal and the eccentric. He is a likeable character. His sense of fun—literary and otherwise—his tendency toward exhibitionism, and his romantic relationships combine to give him a human quality which belies his name. His ways are not strange, but thoroughly natural and believable. But above all, Nigel Strangeways is a ratiocinative detective in that long line beginning with C. August Dupin, and he justly deserves to be included among those called "the great detectives."

* * *

The twenty novels of Nicholas Blake from 1935 to 1968 are both typical and atypical of the period. The typicality lies in their generally following the formulas and conventions of the genre present when Blake began writing, as well as the three late crime novels indicating his recognition of new forms. His creation of a "great detective" is also typical. Much less so are the passion of lovers, the significant presence of children, the compassion for murderers, the presence of explicit themes, the use of the author's own experience, and the basic "normality" of Nigel Strangeways. Julian Symons has accurately described another quality of the novels: "their bubbling high spirits."[9] They give the impression that the author enjoyed writing them, and the enjoyment communicates itself to the reader. Finally, and to repeat, the fact that Nicholas Blake was also C. Day Lewis gives the novels—whatever else they may possess—a lyrical quality that comes from their author being a major poet. No matter what the ultimate judgment of them may be, they can only be considered as the work of the poet as detective novelist.

Notes

1. The editions of Blake's novels used for this study are listed below, preceded by the original date of publication. All quotations will be cited in the text using, where necessary for clarity, the abbreviation given after an entry:

   1935 *A Question of Proof* (New York: Harper, 1979) (Proof)

   1936 *Thou Shell of Death* (New York: Harper, 1977). (Shell)

   1937 *There's Trouble Brewing* (London: Collins, 1973). (Trouble)

   1938 *The Beast Must Die* (New York: Harper, 1978) (Beast)

   1939 *The Smiler With the Knife* (New York: Harper, 1978). (Smiler)

   1940 *Malice in Wonderland* (London: Collins, 1940).(Malice)

   1941 *The Corpse in the Snowman* (New York: Harper, 1977). (Corpse)

   1947 *Minute for Murder* (New York: Harper, 1977). (Minute)

   1949 *Head of a Traveler* (New York: Harper, 1976). (Head)

   1953 *The Dreadful Hollow* (New York: Harper, 1979). (Hollow)

   1954 *The Whisper in the Gloom* (New York: Harper, 1977). (Gloom)

   1956 *A Tangled Web* (New York: Harper, 1956). (Web)

   1959 *A Penknife in My Heart* (New York: Harper, 1980). (Penknife)

   1959 *The Widow's Cruise* (New York: Harper, 1977). (Cruise)

   1961 *The Worm of Death* (New York: Harper, 1976). (Worm)

1963 *The Deadly Joker* (London: Collins, 1963). (Joker)

1964 *The Sad Variety* (New York: Harper, 1979). (Variety)

1966 *The Morning After Death* (New York: Harper, 1980). (Morning)

1968 *The Private Wound* (New York: Harper, 1981). (Wound)

There are eight uncollected Blake short stories: "A Slice of Bad Luck," "The Assassin's Club," "It Fell to Earth," "A Study in White," "Mr. Prendergast and the Orange," "Conscience Money," "Sometimes the Blins," and "Long Shot." For their original publication, see the entry on Blake in *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers,* ed. John M. Reilly (New York: St. Martin's, 1980). The only two considered for this essay are "The Assassin's Club," *Masterpieces of Mystery: The Golden Age-II,* ed. Ellery Queen (New York: Davis, 1977), pp. 261-69, and "A Study in White," *Masterpieces of Mystery: the Forties,* ed. Ellery Queen (New York: Davis, 1978), pp. 252-69.

2. *The Buried Day* (New York: Harper, 1960), p. 202. Further references will be cited in the text.

3. Clifford Dyment, *C. Day Lewis,* Rev. ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1969), p. 28.

4. This "divided mind" and search for "single-mindedness" in Day Lewis's poetry is treated extensively and well in Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation* (New York: Viking, 1972). Hynes also gives a succinct summary of Lewis' Communist period: "Of all the 'thirties poets, Day Lewis was the one who tried longest and hardest to reconcile political commitment with a sense of the integrity of art; he was an active member of the Communist Party . . . and yet he remained what he always was essentially, a lyric poet" (96).

5. The Introduction is reprinted in part as "The Detective Story—Why?" in *The Art of the Mystery Story,* ed. Howard Haycraft (1946; rpt. New York: Biblo & Tannen, 1975), pp. 398-405. All citations are to this version. Though Blake takes the genre seriously, he does not allow it to overpower his sense of humor: "But we had better not be too solemn about the detective novel. Let us be content to say, as readers, that it is a form of escape more stimulating for some of us than bingo, and less harmful than heroin." Quoted in Winslow Dix, "The Second Incarnation of C. Day Lewis," *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* 19 March 1979, p. R14.

6. Quoted in Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor, *A Catalogue of Crime* (New York: Harper, 1971), p. 576.

7. After seeing Irving Penn's 1951 photograph of Blake for *Vogue,* it is impossible for me to imagine Strangeways looking any other way. The photograph is reproduced in Tage la Cour and Harald Mogensen, *The Murder Book: An Illustrated History of the Detective Story*(New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 143.

8. Though I admire much in Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan, *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1981), their view of *The Smiler with the Knife* seems unnecessarily harsh, particularly of Georgia Strangeways' role in it. It also seems naive in their wonderment that Blake could easily write an anti-fascist thriller using the same materials as those of anti-socialist thrillers. Their judgment that Blake's fiction has a "somewhat querulous and vindictive note" toward "feminine tendencies" is in my opinion unwarranted. See pp. 197-200.

9. *Mortal Conseauences* (New York: Harper. 1972). p. 126.

Walter Nash (essay date 1993)

SOURCE: Nash, Walter. "The Lyrical Game: C. Day Lewis's 'Last Words.'" In *Twentieth-Century Poetry: From Text to Context,* edited by Peter Verdonk, pp. 46-56. London: Routledge, 1993.

[*In the following essay, Nash analyzes the form, syntax, and meaning of Day Lewis's poem "Last Words," describing the work as "subtle" and "complex," and concluding that the strength of this "poem of conciliatory elegance" is in its "playfulness."*]

I

This graceful and touching lyric is the end-piece in Day Lewis's collection ***Pegasus and Other Poems*** (1957); the title, **'Last Words'** is thus playfully ambiguous, referring to the poem's epilogic role in the volume, as well as to the topic it proposes. That any reader might consider it a profound utterance, much less a difficult one, seems unlikely. Its great charm is in the ease—a kind of discursive suppleness—with which it proposes, elaborates, and resolves a simple and powerful theme. And yet it is a subtle and in some respects complicated poem. Its playfulness is complex. Rereadings bring out eccentricities of form, of content, of syntax and semantics, until it seems to the reader that the words 'just the game' are indeed applicable to these verses; though whether we are entitled to describe them as 'just *a* game' is another matter.

II

Its prosodic form, at first glance quite regular in broad outline, is notably eccentric in two respects. The first of these is its rhyme-scheme, for it is indeed a rhyming

poem of sorts. In each six-line stanza, the first, third, and fifth lines are unrhymed, while lines two, four, and six rhyme—or rather 'chime', with half-rhymes or consonances. Thus in stanza 1 we find 'game', 'sum', 'them'; in 2, 'reach', 'edge', 'pitch'; in 3, 'round', 'learned', 'hand'; in 4, 'down', 'soon', 'span'. In 5, there is at first a half-rhyme, 'web'—'weep', but then the poem concludes with its one and only full rhyme, 'weep'—'sleep'. This full rhyme obviously communicates a sense of ending, and of positive ending at that; we close the poem on a major, reassuring, conciliatory harmony, after all the preceding modulations of uncertainty.

Those 'modulations' are worth looking at in more detail. In each rhyming trio it is the consonantal element that is the most obvious: the nasal /m/ in stanza 1, the affricates /tʃ/, /dʒ/ in 2, the nasal + stop cluster /nd/ in 3, the nasal /n/ in 4, the stops /b/, /p/ in 5. The accompanying vowels, it might almost seem, are merely there to shape the syllable. They do, however, make interesting acoustic progressions as we follow them through each stanza—progressions from length to shortness, or from greater to lesser sonority. The progressive diminution of sonority is quite evident in stanza 1, where the vowel-length of 'game' is drastically shortened in 'sum', and where the central vowel of 'sum' gives place to a vowel of even lower resonance, the mere murmur of // in 'them'. (Unless, of course, we pronounce 'them' in its strong form, /ðɛm/; but this is barely plausible). In 2, the progression runs from the long vowel of 'reach' to the shorter 'edge' and 'pitch'; in 3, the diphthong of 'round' is followed by the long central vowel of 'learned', and then by the short vowel of 'hand'; and in 4 there is a similar acoustic progression from diphthong ('down') to long vowel ('soon') to short vowel ('span'). Only in the last stanza is the general progression from greater to lesser sonority reversed; there; the short 'web' is followed by the long 'weep', in preparation for the full, concluding sonority of 'sleep'.

These responses to the acoustics of the poem are not mere fancies; they are reasonably based on what is demonstrable from textual fact. But is it then fanciful to suggest a connection between such recurrent shifts of vowel quantity or quality and the prevalent 'mood' or 'feeling' of the poem, its conveyed sense of a talkative hesitation and doubt turning at last to epigrammatic certainty? We here confront the problem that so often vexes beginners in the art of literary stylistics: how can we be sure that the writer *intended,* or indeed was aware of, the 'effects' which we, as readers, are so ready to perceive? But creativeness—as the teacher must repeatedly tell his pupils—trades between levels of conscious awareness and a deep, instinctual feel for the right choice, the true harmonic. In **'Last Words',** the full rhyme at the close no doubt occurred in clear consciousness, as a matter of purposeful design, but the drifting half-rhymes of the preceding stanzas need not have been so deliberately worked out; they suggest a feeling for 'the true harmonic', grounded in instinct, confirmed in effect.[1]

III

The second respect in which the form of **'Last Words'** is eccentric is in the pattern of varying line-lengths from stanza to stanza. There are other poems in the ***Pegasus*** [***Pegasus and Other Poems***] volume which set out a six-line stanza in regular alternations of short and long lines (that is, either S-L-S-L-S-L or L-S-L-S-L-S). Only in this, the volume's final poem, does Day Lewis apparently play a casual game of permutation with the line-lengths. No two stanzas follow quite the same pattern, as the following representation of the scheme will show:

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
Stanza 1	S	L	S	L	L	S
Stanza 2	L	S	L	S	L	S
Stanza 3	S	L	L	S	L	S
Stanza 4	L	S	S	L	L	S
Stanza 5	S	L	S	L	S	L

We might see this simply as an instance of the poet varying the form to amuse himself. Nevertheless, it prompts interesting speculations about relationships between line-length, stanza pattern, and poetic perspective. For instance, the poem begins with a short, grammatically incomplete line ('Suppose, they asked') and ends with a line that is long and grammatically self-contained ('I hear the night bird, I can go to sleep'). The final stanza, indeed, is the only one to end on a long line. That might suggest an affective correlation of 'short'/'unresolved' and 'long'/'resolved'; but although it is arguable that the fluctuations of line-length do indeed trace some such course from questioning to certainty—corresponding to changes noted above in the acoustic and affective character of the rhyme-words—it is not quite so simple or banal (or demonstrably fruitless) as trying to say what the short line 'equals' or what the long line 'connotes'. The significance of the long—short variations is best considered with reference to the total shape of the poem.

Of the five stanzas, the first propounds a question, or in classical terms a *topos*; the last offers a resolution; and the stanzas in the intervening group present three convergent cases, or 'arguments'. This rather obviously resembles the standard lay-out of Graeco-Roman rhetoric, with an introduction, a narration, and a conclusion. We must notice, however, the quite striking stylistic contrast between the introduction, which is conversational, musing, *pre-poetic,* the evocation of a man talking to himself, and the rest of the poem, which is unabashedly *poetic,* rhetorical, or even—if one wished to suggest an

adverse criticism—high-flown. But there is a further internal contrast, between the style of the narration, with its three arguments, each filling the stanza with a different syntactic scheme, and that of the conclusion with its three concise, syntactically parallel declarations, each contained in a short—long pair of lines.

In their alternations of line-length, two stanzas have a mirror-relationship with each other: stanza 2, the first of the narration group, and stanza 5, the conclusion. Stanza 2 has L-S-L-S-L-S, and stanza 5 supplies the reverse pattern with S-L-S-L-S-L. If we accept that the poem proper, at least in its narration, begins with stanza 2, then the mirror turnabout in the patterning of the final stanza must reinforce the impression of an ending, of reaching a goal. It creates a kind of prosodic figure, comparable to verbal schemes like *antimetabole,* in which a design appears to be turned back upon itself, as if in the accomplishment of a completed argument.[2] Stanzas 3 and 4 (the 'romantic youth', the 'ageing man') seem at first glance to be haphazardly regulated in their divisions of long and short, but they too make a symmetrical pair. In their first four lines they mirror one another. Stanza 3 begins S-L-L-S; stanza 4 has L-S-S-L. In the last two lines they are not mirrors but parallels: each ends L-S.

Four stanzas of a poem in which the management of line-length is apparently random, or possibly geared to syntactic requirements, thus turn out to have recursive symmetrical relationships in their prosodic design, like patterns in wallpaper or carpeting. Only the first stanza, it appears, has no design partner; but this is the odd item out, not only in the numerical sense (there are five stanzas in the poem, and two pairs leave one over), but also in the rhetorical—poetic sense, the first stanza being the prefatory mulling over of a proposition roughly paraphrasable as 'let's write a poem'. It is external to the symmetry which contains the rest of the poem, a symmetry leading, in the final stanza, to a prosodic mirror which is also a mirror of content; for the 'child', 'youth', and 'ageing man' of the narration appear in reverse order in the conclusion, as 'man', 'youth', and 'child'.

Once again, those old questions of intentionality arise. Here we have what seems to be a very ingenious control of prosodic design, linking the management of line-length with the very movement and meaning of the poem, its progression from the hesitant mumbling of its opening to the decisive assertions of its close. Is this a clear case of a poet knowing and consciously choosing?; or of what might be called the permutations of instinct?; or simply of a reader seeing what a reader wishes to find? It is in the nature of things poetic that we cannot be wholly certain about such matters; nevertheless, this text presents more than one instance of the ostensibly casual choice that must in fact be the product of an inherent, controlling intelligence.

IV

There is, for example, the matter of the poem's syntax in relationship to its prosody and to its overall design in the phases of introduction, narration, and conclusion. The first and the last stanzas, are, so to speak, structurally fragmented, albeit in significantly different ways. Stanza 1 rambles over its six lines, but the ramble is interrupted by marks suggesting the vocal features of an 'aside' (the parenthesis), a pause (the dots), a colloquial topic—comment structure (the colon after 'Last words'). The syntax, the dynamics of punctuation, the breaking of lines and overrunning of line-ends, collectively suggest talk, and talk of a hesitant and somewhat muted kind. This is in contrast with stanza 5, which is divided, or 'portioned', rather than 'fragmented'. The portions are of equal size, are parallel syntactic/rhetorical structures, and suggest, rather than the talker, the speaker, and the public speaker at that, convinced of the rightness of his oration. It is almost as though the poem began with Mr Pooter and ended with St Paul.

These 'fragmented' and 'portioned' outer stanzas are to be contrasted with the interior group of three making up the narration. Here in each case there is an elaborate syntactic structure filling the whole stanza, without breaking or portioning. These are non-finite structures, complex noun phrases developing their initial headwords ('the child', 'the romantic youth', 'the ageing man') through qualifying relative clauses ('who . . . heard', 'for whom horizons were') or, in the case of stanza 4, a participle clause ('seeing his lifelong travel . . .'). These qualifiers are in each case extended by additional clauses expressing, in some way, a sense of the unfolding of time. Thus, in stanza 2, 'Heard nightly . . . and *soon* . . . had perfect pitch'; in 3, 'were the daily round . . . *till* he had learned'; and in 4, 'seeing his . . . toil scaled down to a flimsy web . . . dissolving *soon,* and only the . . . dew makes visible *now* its haunted span'.

In that fourth stanza, the present participle and the time adverbs—notably *now*—are tell tales, bringing the narrative up to date, as it were. Stanzas 2 and 3 are perspectives on the past, but 4 tells us emphatically that the standpoint of the story is *now*; which explains and introduces the deixis of the final stanza, where what we read is not '*the* man', suggesting an objective distance, as in 'I am not the man I was', but '*this* man'. Furthermore, 'this man' is emphatically identified with 'this youth' and 'this child'. The question is no longer 'which of me'? The answer is 'each and all of me'—even though it is the child who is given the last tender word.

V

This is a poem of transmutations, not least in the lexicon, where there are shifts of meaning—or perhaps shifts of shades of meaning—comparable with the shifti-

ness of the acoustic colouring, the prosodic design, and the grammar. Anyone generally acquainted with Day Lewis's work will be aware of his liking for what might be called the serious pun, the play on words that significantly enriches or adumbrates an image. There are several examples of this in **'Last Words'.** 'Hoodwinked' is an instance of a word with a dual relationship, referring on the one hand to 'orbit', via the implied image of falconry, and on the other to the notions of 'deception', 'delusion', commonly associated with this term.[3] 'Travel' in stanza 4 is a manifest etymological play on 'travail', a reminder of the close association between journeying, labour, and suffering. 'Stranded' puns on the senses 'stretched out like a strand, or thread', and 'left in helpless isolation'. It is generally characteristic of this poet that the overt allusion to some kind of *fact* is accompanied by a veiled, transmuting reference to a state of mind or *feeling.*

In the cases quoted, the transmutation takes place within a single word; the receptive reader takes these ambivalences into immediate account. But there is another device of transmutation, spanning the poem, linking the three arguments of the narration with the three declarations of the conclusion. This lexical scheme runs as follows:

'an engine whistle'	becomes	'the night bird'
'hoodwinked orbit'	becomes	'treadmill'
'flimsy web'	becomes	'homespun web'

Each of these implies a psychological change for the better, though that might not seem immediately obvious from the bare examples. The instance of 'an engine whistle'—'the night bird' is the clearest; something objective, factual, specific, *worldly,* reappears at the end as something subjective, mythical, *unworldly.* The transmutation of 'flimsy web' to 'homespun web' is also quite clearly a change towards positive affirmation. 'Homespun' suggests the strength of decent effort and craftsmanship. There is truth and honour in what is homespun; 'flimsy' may suggest hapless failure, 'homespun' does not. More puzzling is the transmutation of an 'orbit' into a 'treadmill'. Both may imply repetitive movement, vain circling—but the treadmill is surely a more painful, punitive thing than the hunting bird's orbit. This looks rather like a change for the worse—until we consider the assertion that '*prairies* bow to the treadmill'—meaning that hard labour may have huge rewards; whereas the falcon's flight is an 'orbit of *clay*', a vain, hoodwinked circling over barren ground. The transmutation of 'orbit' into 'treadmill' is the change from profitless yearning to a perception of how golden attainments—Eldorados and prairies—become accessible through common repetitive toil.[4]

VI

'Last Words' is characteristic of Day Lewis's mature (or middle-aged) lyric style: a blend of modern techniques—for example, in the use of half-rhymes—with traditional or classical sentiments and topics. Though he is a poet of great (and generally underestimated) technical accomplishment, his verse is rarely innovative in content; it remembers its own moods, keeps faith with its own past. In the second stanza of **'Last Words',** the stanza that so poignantly evokes the image of the wakeful child listening for the melancholy—romantic sound of the engine whistle, readers may perceive the reworking of a motif from **'Cornet Solo',** a poem written thirteen years earlier, in which the child lies awake listening to the plaintive music of the cornet in a street-band.[5] That is typical of the retrospective stance of his later work.

It is also typical of him to organize the contents of a volume so that the poems have some kind of hermeneutic relationship with one another; each poem speaks to its neighbours. Accordingly, anyone reading the ***Pegasus*** volume will detect in **'Last Words'** a note of summation. The collection is divided into three sections, the first containing reworkings or psychological transmutations of classical myth, the second a group of mainly elegiac or memorial poems, and the third a miscellany principally devoted to reflections on the past and on personal relationships. The reader who comes to **'Last Words'** with these themes freshly in mind will perceive echoes of them, and will be predisposed to read the poem not only as a statement in its own poetic right, but also as an epilogue to the volume. This no doubt makes for a richer, or at least a more complex reading. But the poem will stand on its own, and its strength, it may be said, is in its playfulness, the ludic spirit that almost distracts attention from the sombre *topos*—'how should we face age, and loneliness, and death?'—and creates a poem of conciliatory elegance, most memorable in the tenderness and grace of its closing line. Just the game for a man of words—but the game is serious, the words well-chosen.

Notes

1. There is perhaps no need to offer a defence against a possible charge of fancifulness in response to half-rhymes. Wilfred Owen and his commentators established a principle of half-rhyme usage described by Edmund Blunden (1931: 29): 'again and again by means of it he creates remoteness, darkness, emptiness, shock, echo, the last word'. Michael Roberts (1936: 23-4) elaborates: 'In Owen's war poetry, the half-rhymes almost invariably fall from a vowel of high pitch to one of low pitch, producing an effect of frustration, disappointment, hopelessness. In other poets, rising half-rhymes are used, which produce the opposite effect, without reaching out to the full heartiness of rhyme.' (Roberts's reference to 'pitch' is phonetically inaccurate.) Blunden remarks of Owen's

half-rhymes that 'so complete and characteristic is his deployment of this technical resource that imitators have been few'. That, however, was written in 1931; half-rhyme was a regular feature in the poetry of the ensuing decade. Commenting on Owen, Kennet Allott observes: 'His discovery of para-rhyme . . . was an invention of an important order *and its subsequent too indiscriminate use by poets of the thirties* should not blind us to this fact' (1963: 118; my emphasis).

2. A classic example of *antimetabole* (or *chiasmus*) is the assertion 'One must eat to live, not live to eat', where the constituent elements are mirrored a-b-b-a. Such formulations create the impression of a clinching statement—even when nothing is clinched.

3. Here Day Lewis perhaps deliberately unsettles the propriety of his image. The hunting bird is 'hoodwinked' with a small leather cap until the moment comes for it to fly; it does not wear this hood when in 'orbit', and 'hoodwinked orbit' is an oxymoron, or contradiction in terms. However, the poet may have intended just that; the young idealist's free flying is in fact blind flying.

4. When I wrote this, I had primarily in mind the kind of treadmill represented in lithographs of nineteenth-century penal institutions—a kind of stepped drum which was revolved by the endless tramping of the unfortunate prisoners. It has since been put to me that the word 'treadmill' may also denote another kind of device, a millstone fixed on a pole and turned by a horse plodding round and round in circles. This, indeed, may better suit Day Lewis's concept of false and true effort: the barren circuit of the lofty hawk, the profitable circling of the patient horse.

5. 'Cornet Solo', from *Word over All* (1943), reprinted in *Collected Poems, 1954*: 215.

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MaryKay Mahoney (essay date 1993-95)

SOURCE: Mahoney, MaryKay. "Patricia Highsmith, Nicholas Blake, and the Case of the Duplicate Murder." *The University of Mississippi Studies in English* 11-12 n.s. (1993-1995): 81-7.

[*In the following essay, Mahoney uncovers similarities between* Strangers on a Train *by Patricia Highsmith and Day Lewis's detective novel* A Penknife in My Heart, *particularly with regard to the imagery that appears in both novels, and she concludes that Day Lewis "had no conscious memory of having read* Strangers on a Train, *but his unconscious memory, with its keen sense of image and pattern, seems to have known better."*]

In 1958 British poet C. Day-Lewis, in his role as detective novelist Nicholas Blake, found himself confronted by an unsettling real-life puzzle: he wrote a novel, published it, and then discovered that there were uncanny—and disconcerting—resemblances to a novel by another established writer—who had earlier published hers. As Blake himself describes it in his "Author's Note" to later editions of ***A Penknife in My Heart***:

> After a British edition of this book had gone to press, I discovered that the basis of its plot is similar to that of a novel by Patricia Highsmith, *Strangers on a Train,* published in 1950 by Harper & Brothers and later made into a film. I had never read this novel, or seen the film, nor do I remember ever hearing about them. My own treatment of the basic idea—the switching of victims—is very different from Miss Highsmith's. But two of the chief characters in my story, I found to my consternation, bore the same Christian names as two in hers: these have been changed; and I should like to thank Miss Highsmith for being so charmingly sympathetic over the predicament in which the long arm of coincidence put me.[1]

The long arm of coincidence was certainly at work: in both novels one man proposes to another a collaborative murder project: I'll kill your wife if you'll kill my father/uncle. Both proposals occur in the twilight land of travel, where both past and future are briefly suspended. In both cases the person who proposes the murder finally dies of drowning in the course of a trip on a sailing boat, a trip on which he is accompanied by his fellow murderer. In both cases, the second murderer chooses finally to confess, in both cases to his dead wife's lover. And, most upsetting from Nicholas Blake's point of view, there is the strange similarity mentioned in his "Author's Note"—in each book the killer who proposes trading victims is named Charles, and the wife who becomes victim number one is named Miriam.

As Blake points out, his handling of the collaborative murder theme is dramatically different from that of Highsmith. Highsmith's first murderer, Charles Bruno, is permanently caught in adolescence—his emotions are

erratic and uncontrolled, his desire to have his father murdered is largely a result of a classic Oedipal triangle, and one of his primary reasons for killing Guy Haines's wife is a hero-worshipper's need to ally himself with the object of his admiration, in this case architect Guy. The book as a whole traces Guy Haines's gradual recognition of the nature of the bond he shares with Charles Bruno: "Each was what the other had not chosen to be, the cast-off self, what he thought he hated but perhaps in reality loved."[2] When Charles Bruno is drowning, freeing Guy from the greatest threat to his freedom, Guy tries desperately to save him; once left alone, Guy finds the guilt of their joint venture too much for one person to bear.

Nicholas Blake's Charles Hammer (or Stuart Hammer, as he is called in later editions) is very different from Highsmith's Charles Bruno: Stuart is a coldblooded calculator who deliberately manipulates Edwin Stowe into a shared murder scheme. And Edwin Stowe—Ned—is far more like Nicholas Blake's C. Day-Lewis self than he is like Highsmith's Guy. As Sean Day-Lewis—C. Day-Lewis's son—points out, Ned is named after the home village of C. Day-Lewis's adolescence—Edwinstowe. And Ned Stowe shares with C. Day-Lewis a complicated and psychologically tangled double life of wife and mistress, and a sense of himself as a "'moral desperado.'"[3] Ned's role in the murders is also substantially different from that of Highsmith's Guy, who only realizes after the fact that Bruno has killed Guy's wife, Miriam. Blake's Ned *willingly* agrees to the death of his wife (Miriam in the first edition, Helena later) and sees her death as his only chance to be reborn into a new life with the woman he now loves. In the end, the perfect murder plot designed by Stuart Hammer is derailed by Ned's sense of responsibility for his wife's lover, an unstable young man who fears that he himself did the killing in a brainstorm. When Stuart Hammer, the originator of the murder plot, drowns, there is no rescue attempt, as in Highsmith, by his fellow murderer. Hammer is himself a murder victim, since Ned expiates his crime with a murder/suicide: a deliberately staged collision between Hammer's small sloop—with both men aboard—and a large steamer.

As these two short summaries suggest, the novels are so different in overall effect that, with the Miriam and Charles name changes, a reader familiar with Highsmith's work could easily read the Blake novel with no sense of familiarity whatsoever.

Could the resemblances between the two novels be indeed, as Blake describes it, simply a result of "the long arm of coincidence"? Could Blake perhaps have read a review of Highsmith's novel, or heard the plot described? Such a situation could neatly account for the shared plot device, the name duplications, and the disposal of characters by drowning.

But other evidence in the book suggests differently—that despite Blake's failure to remember the book, he indeed had at some point encountered it. Nicholas Blake/C. Day-Lewis saw himself as a poet first—and a detective writer only second (his first detective novel was written to finance repairs to a leaky roof). And it is C. Day-Lewis's fascination with images that helps provide compelling evidence that Blake must have at least skimmed through the pages of Highsmith's novel.

In ***The Poetic Image,*** a book derived from his Clark Lectures, C. Day-Lewis describes three stages in the construction of a poem. In the first, "The poet . . . starts with an impression, a drop of the river of experience, crystallized perhaps into an image."[4] For the second stage, Day-Lewis describes Yeats's method: Yeats spoke "of the trance-like state in which 'images pass rapidly before you,' and said that it is necessary 'to suspend will and intellect, to bring up from the subconscious anything you already possess a fragment of'" (69). In the third stage, for Day-Lewis, "the work of criticism begins, the selection or rejection of associated images in conformity with the now emerging pattern of the poem" (69).

For Day-Lewis, then, the first two stages in the writing of a poem involve encounters with images, the second stage being an almost hypnotized session in which there emerges from the subconscious "anything you already possess a fragment of." If Day-Lewis the prose-writer were to be heavily influenced—albeit unknowingly—by another writer, one would expect some trace of it to remain in flashes of imagery—some of which would undoubtedly be appropriate to the emerging pattern of Day-Lewis's/Blake's own work.

For a reader of Highsmith's novel, the scene on the merry-go-round in Metcalf is likely to be one of the most striking images of the book. Miriam, the victim to be, rides round and round, accompanied without her knowledge by her murderer to be. For Charles Bruno, the merry-go-round is a center point—a moment of anticipation linked with his sense of the promise and excitement of the childhood world he has never quite outgrown: "He felt he was about to experience again some ancient, delicious childhood moment that the steam calliope's sour hollowness, the stitching hurdy-gurdy accompaniment, and the drum-and-cymbal crash brought almost to the margin of his grasp" (69).

Such an image would be wildly inappropriate to Blake's Stuart Hammer, who except in his resentment for his uncle/guardian seems to never have been a child. But a tiny merry-go-round image flashes through Blake's pages nevertheless—linked not with Stuart, but with Stuart's cousin Barbara, whom he has ruthlessly romanced as a matter of financial prudence. Barbara, looking back, sees their affair in terms of a childhood whirl now outgrown:

> His buccaneering air, his flashy spending, his brassy effrontery in love-making had appealed to the inexperienced girl as a merry-go-round at a fair might appeal to an overprotected child. Barbara had been lifted off her feet, whirled round and round, then the whole thing had ground to a stop, and her natural good sense told her how garish it had all been. She was lucky to have paid so lightly for her ignorance and folly, she thought . . .
>
> (72)

There are limits, of course, to how far this argument can go, since merry-go-rounds have been one of the staples of childhood for generations. In addition, Alfred Hitchcock's 1951 film adaptation of *Strangers on a Train* featured a merry-go-round even more prominently than Highsmith had, using it both for Miriam's murder and for a dramatic final encounter between Guy and Bruno.

Far less ambiguous evidence, however, appears in the two authors' descriptions of the murders, with Blake using images that appear in Highsmith's novel but not in the Hitchcock film. Two of the murders—that of Charles Bruno's father by Guy in *Strangers on a Train* and that of Ned's wife Helena by Stuart Hammer in ***A Penknife in My Heart***—are roughly analogous since they involve the killer's using a detailed description by the other party to enter a house, creep up to the bedroom, and eliminate the chosen victim. Highsmith's description includes a detailed picture of Guy as he reaches the upper hall of "the Doghouse," the house where he will kill Charles Bruno's father:

> The floor gave the tiniest wail of complaint, and Guy resiliently withdrew his foot, waited, and stepped around the spot. Delicately his hand closed on the knob of the hall door. As he opened it, the clock's tick on the landing of the main stairway came louder, and he realized he had been hearing it for several seconds. He heard a sigh.
>
> A sigh on the main stairs!
>
> A chime rang out. The knob rattled, and he squeezed it hard enough to break it, he thought. *Three. Four.* Close the door before the butler hears it!
>
> (136-7)

The picture is a compelling one: a man creeping along the hall, caught in terror by what seems to be a sigh, and then realizing that the sound is merely that of the clockworks preparing for the chimes that follow.

Blake includes a similar moment, as Stuart Hammer enters the front hall of the home of Ned and Helena Stowe the night Helena is killed:

> He shone his torch beam into the black, gaping throat of the hall. Empty. He slipped in, closing the door behind him and releasing the catch of the lock. The faint click this made, as if it were the start of a chain reaction, merged into a hoarse, strangulated, rasping sound, which set his heart bumping. He swung round in the darkness to face whatever the thing was. And the next instant, a grandfather clock, which had been gathering its senile forces to strike, began chiming the hour.
>
> (92)

Again, the voice-like sound—now harsh and strangulated—and the sudden ringing out of the chimes. The image has a vivid symbolic appropriateness for both books: the sense of the ticking away of the minutes of the victim's life, the ringing out of the chimes that is like a slightly premature death knell for the chosen victim.

But a far more striking resemblance appears in terms of what happens to Highsmith's Guy as he flees the scene of the crime. In approaching the house before the murder, Guy's hat is torn from his head by a branch. After the murder, in the panic of flight, he takes a route other than those Charles Bruno had marked out for him, and finds himself in the midst of a small woods:

> Something had caught him and was holding him. He fought it automatically with his fists, and found it was bushes, twigs, briars, and kept fighting and hurling his body through it, because the sirens were still behind him and this was the only direction to go. He concentrated on the enemy ahead of him, and on both sides and even behind him, that caught at him with thousands of sharp tiny hands whose crackling began to drown out even the sirens. He spent his strength joyfully against them, relishing their clean, straight battle against him.
>
> He awakened at the edge of a woods, face down on a downward sloping hill. Had he awakened, or had he fallen only a moment ago? But there was greyness in the sky in front of him, the beginning of dawn, and when he stood up, his flickering vision told him he had been unconscious. His fingers moved directly to the mass of hair and wetness that stood out from the side of his head. Maybe my head is broken, he thought in terror, and stood for a moment dully, expecting himself to drop dead.
>
> Below, the sparse lights of a little town glowed like stars at dusk. Mechanically, Guy got out a handkerchief and wrapped it tight around the base of his thumb where a cut had oozed black-looking blood.
>
> (141-142)

In a symbolically appropriate move, the brambles have scarred Guy's face and hand, emphasizing the second self he has chosen by his alliance with Bruno. The barely visible traces of those scars permanently mark the change in Guy: a man now both different from and linked to the Guy Haines who existed before the ride on the train.

In Blake's book, the sense of likeness between Stuart Hammer and Ned Stowe, while present, is far more underplayed—in the end their differences remain most

vividly in the reader's mind. And yet Blake also uses this idea of the scars of the killing. Ned Stowe, the character corresponding to Highsmith's Guy, is attacked by the victim's dog (an echo perhaps of the reference to the Doghouse in Highsmith's novel?) and, despite his gloves, Ned's hand is bitten through to the bone. But it is in Stuart Hammer's approach to the Stowe house that the parallel to the Highsmith novel comes through most clearly:

> He had taken off his gloves to alter the number plates; and now, getting out of the car, he stumbled in a deep rut, and throwing out a hand for support, found himself gripping a bramble while another bramble branch slashed viciously across his cheek, and his cap was torn off his head. He fumbled for a handkerchief, mopped at his bleeding hand and face . . .
>
> (90-91)

The murderous Stuart is scarred on both face and hand by what he is about to do; Ned, who at the last moment changes his mind and tries to avoid killing his chosen victim, is only scarred in the hand.

In both novels, the brambles—and the striking clocks—are not vitally necessary to the plot, but have a vivid appropriateness to the overall pattern each author is constructing. Had Nicholas Blake indeed encountered Highsmith's novel? C. Day-Lewis had no conscious memory of having read *Strangers on a Train,* but his unconscious memory, with its keen sense of image and pattern, seems to have known better.

Notes

1. *A Penknife in My Heart* (New York, 1958). Subsequent quotations are cited parenthetically in the text.
2. *Strangers on a Train* (Baltimore, 1950), p. 163. Subsequent quotations are cited parenthetically in the text.
3. *C. Day-Lewis: An English Literary Life* (London, 1980), pp. 232, 237.
4. *The Poetic Image* (New York, 1947), p. 68. Subsequent quotations are cited parenthetically in the text.

Mary P. Freier (essay date 1995)

SOURCE: Freier, Mary P. "The First Six in a Series: Nicholas Blake." In *In the Beginning: First Novels in Mystery Series,* edited by Mary Jean DeMarr, pp. 77-90. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995.

[*In the following essay, Freier appraises the first six detective novels that Day Lewis wrote as Nicholas Blake, arguing that the author's "internal political conflicts" and his "indecision" resulted in "six first novels," in which the "detective and his role change completely from one novel to the next."*]

In many ways, Nicholas Blake—pseudonym of Cecil Day-Lewis—had six first novels: ***A Question of Proof*** (1935), ***Thou Shell of Death*** (1936), ***There's Trouble Brewing*** (1937), ***The Beast Must Die*** (1938), ***The Smiler with the Knife*** (1939), and ***The Corpse in the Snowman*** (1941). These first six Nigel Strangeways novels are very different; the character of Nigel Strangeways develops so radically from novel to novel that it could be said that the detective and his role change completely from one novel to the next. In ***The Smiler with the Knife,*** Nigel Strangeways is not even the detective; his wife Georgia is. In ***The Beast Must Die,*** Nigel is nearly the antagonist. Blake also experiments with narration and point of view in his early novels. The result is that none of these novels is very much like the long string of Nigel Strangeways novels that followed them, and none of them is very like any of the others. The only constant is Blake's attempt to create a Freudian, anti-fascist detective, but after six tries, he seems to give up. He kills off Georgia, and Nigel becomes a fairly typical professional detective in the landscape of detective fiction.

Sean Day-Lewis has pointed out that, in ***A Question of Proof,*** Nigel Strangeways is a nearly exact replica of W.H. Auden, but that "as Cecil grew away from that powerful poetic influence, Nigel became increasingly like himself" (86). Nigel is certainly little more than a collection of quirks in the first novel, and even his quirks are not well-carried-out.

Evans, Nigel's old friend who brings him into the case, warns his lover, Hero, that Nigel will not be a typical house guest, and describes him as "like one of the less successful busts of T.E. Shaw. A nordic type. He's rather faddy, by the way; his protective mechanism developed them, I daresay. But you must have water perpetually on the boil; he drinks tea at all hours of the day. And he can't sleep unless he has an enormous weight on his bed. If you don't give him enough blankets for three, you'll find that he has torn the carpets up or the curtains down" (93). While Nigel does keep asking for inordinate quantities of tea, the other peculiarities never seem to appear, although he is described as nearsighted and as moving awkwardly (94). He also feels the need to sing loudly during the novel's chase scene (95-96). However, he gets along almost miraculously well with both women and children, as well as men, which helps him solve the Sudeley murders.

By the second novel, ***Thou Shell of Death,*** Nigel's quirks have become less pronounced, and many of them have disappeared. Although he is posing as a guest at a country house in this novel, there is no reference to his

need for weights and extra blankets. He drinks less tea, but has developed the annoying habit of setting his cup on the edges of furniture so that the china is in danger of falling. But even this quirk has disappeared by the end of chapter one. It seems that Blake thought that he must create a character out of eccentric mannerisms, but dropped the mannerisms as soon as Nigel actually had any work to do.

Thou Shell of Death is also the novel that introduces Georgia Cavendish, who is later to become Georgia Strangeways. In her early manifestation, Georgia is just as quirky as Nigel. He first sees her when she drives up to the house in her baggage-covered car, with her bloodhound and her parrot (who is later referred to as a cockatiel). Georgia is supposed to be an adventuress and world traveler; she first met daredevil pilot and soon-to-be murder victim Fergus O'Brien when he rescued her from a difficult situation in Africa. Like Nigel's eccentricities, Georgia's parrot and bloodhound disappear later in the novel when Blake finds a way to characterize her more genuinely as the frustrated lover of Fergus O'Brien and the doting sister of Edward Cavendish.

Georgia and Nigel are married in ***There's Trouble Brewing,*** but Georgia appears only in the first chapter. She spends the rest of the novel on one of her famous journeys (5). Nigel has, somewhat suddenly for readers of the series, become a literary critic. He is the author of a book on the Caroline poets, and he lectures on modern poetry (3, 14). He now sings loudly only while shaving, and contents himself with humming in public places (121-22, 18).

By ***The Beast Must Die,*** Georgia and Nigel are married, and Georgia seems to have dwindled into a wife. She is primarily concerned about Nigel's physical and mental health, although she is still capable of asserting herself, as she does when Nigel lies about her being exhausted from the trip: "So I'm 'done up,' am I? Coming from a gentleman on the verge of physical and mental collapse, that was good" (107). Her knowledge of the world, drawn from her travels, is useful in analyzing the characters whom she and Nigel encounter, but she says that she wants nothing to do with the case (108), and, as it progresses, she becomes little more than a solicitous sounding board for Nigel.

Nigel, on the other hand, has become less quirky and is more concerned with the morality of what he's doing; Georgia even comments that she doesn't like his methods (108). But by the end of the novel, Nigel and the local police detective, Inspector Blount, have a major falling out because Nigel has allowed the murderer to commit suicide, which Blount perceives as allowing him to escape. However, Nigel still provides some labored comic relief by singing loudly and badly (140-41).

Part of the reason for the confusion about the characters in the first four novels is that Blake can't seem to decide if he wants them to be comic or serious, and he doesn't handle the shifts between the two elements very well. In ***The Smiler with the Knife,*** a serious thriller, this tension has resolved somewhat, and the humor is confined to sarcastic remarks about the government's impotence in the face of the Fascist threat. By ***The Corpse in the Snowman,*** Nigel and Georgia's quirks have been transferred to their eccentric relatives.

In ***The Smiler with the Knife,*** Georgia is chosen to find out more about the insidious English Banner (or E.B.), a Fascist organization. Nigel is too well-known to undertake the task (one wonders what has happened to Georgia's reputation as an adventuress, not to mention the bloodhound and the bird). In this novel, Georgia is portrayed as the nervous amateur, and Nigel as the calm and seasoned professional. Nigel seems to have become more of a father-figure than a lover; at one point, Georgia even wishes that she were able to confide in him and ask for advice. In ***The Corpse in the Snowman,*** Georgia has earned the privilege of discussing the case and the psychology of the characters with Nigel on an equal footing. However, Blake felt the need to get rid of Georgia before the next novel; he had decided that she was a "bore" (Sean Day-Lewis 169). The elimination of Georgia may have helped Blake settle on a characterization for Nigel.

Blake also used these six novels as an opportunity to experiment with narrative strategies. ***A Question of Proof*** begins with a pseudo-dramatic scene setting, written in present tense. Like Nigel's peculiar habits, this rather annoying method of narration disappears as the novel gets under way. In ***Thou Shell of Death,*** Blake employs a more traditional narrative style. However, both novels seem to be trying to be novels by Dorothy L. Sayers, with their heavy use of irony, the eccentric characterization of the upper classes, and the stress on the education of the major characters. While the educational emphasis may be understandable in ***A Question of Proof,*** since it is set in a school, having an Oxford don as one of the houseguests in ***Thou Shell of Death*** is a bit farfetched. In ***The Beast Must Die,*** the first third of the novel is given over to Felix Lane's diary. The second part of the novel is done with a third-person narration, and when a character's point of view is used, it is Felix Lane's. The third section of the novel, where Nigel is called in to deal with the murder, is also done in third-person narration, and the point of view is clearly Nigel's, except when it shifts to another character to allow us to see Nigel through that character's eyes. One of the reasons for these shifts in point of view is to permit us to see Georgia's concern for her husband's health.

There's Trouble Brewing is seen primarily though Nigel's eyes, with occasional glimpses from the other

characters' point of view. These shifts again allow us to see Nigel, but they also enable us to see the fear of the community of Maiden Astbury. ***The Smiler with the Knife*** uses Georgia's point of view to show her anxieties about her espionage and emphasize her position as inspired amateur. Her desire to get back to her country home and her joy upon reaching it are clearly designed to create reader empathy and to convince the reader that, without the efforts of average people, the Fascists would win the day.

Blake returns to a more traditional third-person narration in ***The Corpse in the Snowman*** and again uses Georgia as a part of the narration. However, in this novel, she is used primarily for Nigel to think out loud to, a narrative strategy that Blake returned to after he replaced Georgia with the artist Clare Massinger.

Other drastic changes between these novels are caused by Day-Lewis's own political confusion. While he was a strong anti-fascist and believed that Freudian psychology had replaced Puritan Christianity, he was never able to stop loving his country and much of what was considered "bourgeois" about it.

He believed that culture was making a great shift, a revolution, and that one of the major changes was its turning away from a disintegrating Christianity (***Revolution*** [***Revolution in Writing***] 27). Puritanism had lost its "religious fervor and single-mindedness," leaving only what he called the "nonconformist Conscience," which has an "inveterate feud against everything that people mean by the word 'beauty.'" This feud has "led it to condemn poetry equally with sex as something at best flippant and at worst immoral" (***Hope*** [***A Hope for Poetry***] 33). As a poet, Day-Lewis found this attitude threatening, and his loathing of evangelical Protestants persisted well into the 1950s in the character of Daniel Durdle in ***The Dreadful Hollow*** (1953). Nicholas Blake was especially fond of the idea of the murderous Puritan in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Although Day-Lewis believed that Christianity was losing its influence, he also believed that something would come to take its place. Day-Lewis thought that this "something" would be the theories of Sigmund Freud. Freud's theories, according to Day-Lewis, "altered all the values of the human equation. [They have] given us a new conception of character . . . above all [they challenge] us to reconstruct our morality on [their] new foundations." He believed that a new religion could be created through the study of Freud (***Revolution*** 13-14). He also believed that a detective could use Freud's theories to track down murderers.

Nigel Strangeways "neglected Demosthenes in favor of Freud" during his brief stay at Oxford (***Shell*** [***Thou Shell of Death***] 8), and his study of psychology is quite obvious in ***A Question of Proof.*** As soon as he gets to the school where the murder has occurred, Nigel walks through the halls, listening to the masters while they teach. His summations of character are based not only on personal judgment but on his reading of Freud: he notes that one instructor "doesn't talk to the boys like a homosexual, repressed or otherwise," and he decides that Percival Vale would do nothing to hurt the school, since it is an extension of his own ego (101). He immediately diagnoses Sims as having "the slave mentality. Chock-full of inferiority feeling no doubt . . . Is there a point at which such slaves rebel?" (103). He later wonders how to ask Sims about a piece of evidence, since he suspects that he has "a first-class persecution mania" (134). Nigel also suspects that Wrench plays up his aesthetic interests and leftist politics in order to assert his character, "a common enough manifestation of inferiority feeling" (146). And when Nigel has discovered the murderer, he explains that Sims's "religious mania" did not actually bring him to murder: "at the bottom of the heap we find that old chestnut, the inferiority complex" (224). Nigel's knowledge of Freud literally helps him discover the murderer.

A Question of Proof, in many ways, shows Day-Lewis's conviction that Freud's theories would replace Christianity; the murderer turns out to be the ineffectual Puritan, Sims, who attempts to throw the blame for his murders on the lovers, Hero and Michael. Nigel explains that Sims probably followed them when they had their trysts in the woods: "It was a kind of self-torture to him . . . but he kept whipping up his Puritan blood . . . till in the end he believed himself the instrument of God to punish the sinner . . . [In his diary] he's terribly outspoken on the subject, and there's nothing quite so nasty as the Puritan's fascinated horror of sex, when he finds words for it" (219).

Nigel is so pleased with this solution that he tries to use it in his next case. In ***Thou Shell of Death,*** when Fergus O'Brien's man-servant is severely wounded by someone wielding a poker, Nigel immediately suspects the judgmental Calvinist cook. However, he must give up his theory: "One expected a Calvinist to disapprove of everyone else on principle, but scarcely to carry this disapproval to the length of poker-work" (89). Besides, she has no motive. Nigel's perceptive capabilities, however, are still considered superior to those of the other characters because of his knowledge of Freud: when Fergus O'Brien suggests that the world will never be at peace because "it wants to die," he defers to Nigel: "y'know more than I do about Freud's death will" (27).

In ***There's Trouble Brewing,*** the psychology of the entire village is extensively discussed by Nigel and his host, Dr. Herbert Cammison. Maiden Astbury is rife with repression, persecution mania, neurosis, and dementia praecox, among other psychological illnesses

(43, 27, 111, 112). While most villages in detective fiction seem to suffer from similar epidemics of dysfunction, clinical terms are not used nearly so often.

Blake's psychological religion is presented less clinically in ***The Corpse in the Snowman.*** The first corpse in this novel is that of the beautiful but licentious Elizabeth Restorick. Although Clarissa Cavendish wants Nigel to "save Elizabeth from damnation" (22), she does not judge her. In fact, she warns Nigel against judging Betty "too harshly" (17) because she has had an American education. Clarissa has listened to Betty's confidences about her lovers, and she finds it impossible to despise her activities: "Glorying in wickedness, the world would call it, but I am a foolish old woman, I was so dazzled by the glory I could not see the wickedness" (55). We are also told that Betty is "good at heart." Will Dykes tells Nigel that "Betty was what the world made her," and insists that "in her heart she was innocent" (41).

The character in the novel who cannot accept Betty's true innocence is her loving brother, Andrew. Bogan, the psychiatrist, immediately classifies Andrew as "a puritan. Repressed" (140), which agrees with Georgia and Nigel's analysis of Andrew's history and character: "He admitted he behaved like a prig and a prude [when Betty became pregnant in high school]. He must have been wrapped up in a sexual idealism to have treated his beloved sister so harshly. . . . That tragedy perverted his idealism, left him with a hatred for sex. . . . The idealism, having nothing positive to build on, has turned bad" (121). And when Andrew responds somewhat violently to Eunice Ainsley's remarks about Betty's promiscuity, Nigel thinks that "Andrew has not lost the priggish, puritanical idealist. . . . streak" (103). Andrew's puritanism, like Sims's, drives him to murder and to attempting to incriminate someone else for the crime.

Day-Lewis's modern views also took in modern politics. He once summarized the attitude of the thirties liberals by claiming that they had believed that "the capitalist system was obsolescent, that mass unemployment and fascism were evil things . . . that the nationalization of the means of production would cure a lot of our troubles and that this would never be effectually done except under Communism . . . we believed that a second world war was on its way" (***Buried Day*** 208). The first five Nicholas Blake novels were written in the 1930s, and they all are very much imbued with Day-Lewis's social philosophy. Earl F. Bargainnier has noted the political commentary in the first three novels (145), but Day-Lewis remained an anti-fascist until the end of World War II, and the Nicholas Blake novels clearly show this. However, the politics in the novels sometimes seems labored and even sophomoric, in part because of the author's own divided loyalties.

The major problem with Blake's use of politics in his detective novels is that it is essentially superficial. Most of Blake's "proletarian" characters could be the creations of any good "bourgeois" detective novelist. Justin Replogle has pointed out that Day-Lewis "was firmly rooted in the upper middle-class traditions of England. . . . he never shook himself free of the pleasant bonds of British middle-class convention. . . . The facts were . . . that he cherished many of the features of the old capitalist England" (141). Although Blake goes out of his way to create "proletarian" characters, he retains a strong sense of social position: Will Dykes in ***The Corpse in the Snowman*** may be a character of "upper-class" sensibilities in a "lower-class" body, but Rosa in ***A Question of Proof*** never rises above her station in any positive way. The country policemen in both ***A Question of Proof*** and ***There's Trouble Brewing*** are foolish yokels, and, although Blake wants us to sneer with him at Percival Vale's snobbery toward Wrench in ***A Question of Proof,*** we are never instructed to feel any other way about the character who is first termed an "incurable petty bourgeois" and reads books with "artistic" illustrations (16).

Another example of Day-Lewis's conflict is exhibited in his philosophy of the detective novel. Sean Day-Lewis tells us that one of his father's reasons for writing detective stories was to portray the "guilt motive": he believed that the detective novel appeals to the middle class because it is a "kind of substitute religious ritual" in which the detective portrays the "light" and the murderer the "dark" sides of "man's nature," so that the reader can identify with both of these characters, as can the author of the work. The detective solves the mystery "because he has more or less supernatural powers." However, Day-Lewis's bourgeois tendencies surface when he claims that this sort of detective novel would not appeal to workers, since they have "less time and incentive" to be concerned about the state of their consciences. Day-Lewis also believed that human life matters less to the workers, who read "bloods" in which life is cheap (86-87).

Blake became more interested in pure evil and less interested in guilt as he continued his series and Hitler continued his conquests. By 1941, in ***The Corpse in the Snowman,*** Andrew Restorick complains that "The trouble about detective novelists is that they shirk the real problem. . . . The problem of evil. That's the only really interesting thing about crime . . . the criminal in the average detective novel is [dull], a mere kingpin to hold together an intricate, artificial plot, the major premises of an argument that leads nowhere. But . . . what about the man who revels in evil? The man or woman whose very existence seems to depend upon the power to hurt or degrade others?" (27). Later, Dr. Bogan is described to us as a man motivated by "the horrible satisfaction of destroying people body and soul . . . with a

dreadful relish for power, a genius so perverted that it could feel that relish only in corruption" (159). It is no accident that this description of the evil man was written in 1941, and that, when Andrew first brings up the subject of evil for evil's sake, the inane Eunice Ainsley immediately thinks of Hitler (27). It is also no accident that the fiendish E.B. leader, Chilton Canteloe, was created in 1939, when the Fascist powers were being conciliated.

In the early Blake novels, the political setting is frequently used to develop the characters and to make political statements. In ***Thou Shell of Death,*** Sir John Strangeways says of the Home Secretary: "fussy old hen, he's suddenly developed Communist-phobia; thinks they're going to put a bomb under his bed. Ought to know they don't allow acts of individual violence" (17). Blake shows Sir John as a confident, capable man with a sense of humor, but he does not ridicule the Communists; rather, he ridicules the Home Secretary's fearful ignorance.

There's Trouble Brewing deals with the supposed murder of a tyrannical brewery owner, who acts as virtual dictator of the village of Maiden Astbury. He also embodies the worst of capitalism. He refuses to modernize his brewery, which endangers his workers and actually costs him money. When Dr. Cammison tries to get him to improve working conditions, he is blackmailed for his efforts and his wife is sexually harassed (69-75).

In ***The Beast Must Die,*** Blake brings up the current events of 1938 when his not-so-dumb starlet, Lena Lawson, remarks, as part of her seemingly endless chatter, that "all these Jews are in league I must say we could do with a bit of Hitler here though I do rather bar rubber truncheons and sterilization" (36). We have been introduced to Lena as a possible accessory to Felix Lane's son's murder; her thoughtless, anti-Semitic remarks show her to be an accessory to murder on a large scale as well.

We are not supposed to sympathize with Lena or her remarks; we are, however, supposed to sympathize with Felix Lane, who remarks to his diary that "only generals, Harley Street specialists and mine-owners can get away with murder successfully" (8). In one sentence, Blake comments on the slaughter of war, the influence of wealth, and the poor working conditions in the collieries. Day-Lewis was to say later, in ***The Buried Day,*** that accidents are much more frequent in the mines than most people ever know; the public learns only about "major disasters" (145).

The Smiler with the Knife is an almost straightforward warning to the British about the forces of fascism, and is probably the most successful of the first six novels. When Nigel is explaining the probable conspiracy masked by the E.B., he warns Georgia that the leader may not be an ordinary politician and reminds her of the British love for the "inspired amateur." Georgia agrees: "it's part of our national romanticism to trust the amateur rather than the professional" (39). Georgia, of course, is an "inspired amateur" herself and saves England. However, when she succeeds in her mission, "Important Personages" want to give her "the thanks of a grateful nation," but she refuses their invitations: "she did not wish to be reminded of [her year-long ordeal] by the fulsome compliments of politicians whose own pusillanimity or self-interest were responsible for its having happened at all. She had performed her task and wanted no thanks for something which should never have been necessary" (241). Blake is saying that if the politicians continue to conciliate Hitler, someone may have to perform a task like Georgia's, and there is always the possibility that the inspired amateur may fail.

Despite his criticism of the government, Day-Lewis's loyalty to England comes through strongly in the early Nicholas Blake novels, particularly ***The Smiler with the Knife*** and ***The Corpse in the Snowman.*** D.E.S. Maxwell has summarized the conflict in ***The Smiler with the Knife*** as "the traditional English pleasures—cricket, country life—against the conspiracy of a Mosley-like organization to seize power in Britain" (60). Sir John Strangeways finally talks Georgia into taking on the E.B. by using this view of England. He asks her to look at the people:

> It was the rush hour. A hundred yards away she could see the crowds hurrying home along the main thoroughfare. Typists, shop-assistants, business girls, tired yet moving with a gallant swing. She knew instinctively what Sir John wanted her to see there. His words only echoed what her own heart was telling her.
>
> "Look at them," he said quietly . . . "They're not a bad lot, are they? Silly, vain, pert, ignorant, vulgar—some of them. But they've a grace of their own, haven't they? They've youth and independence and courage. They're England. And you know what the other side says—'Woman is for the recreation of the warrior'—'Woman's place is in the kitchen'—all the rest of the neanderthal tommyrot. That's what would happen, though. No young man to meet her outside the cinema tonight. He's got a date with a sadist storm trooper in a concentration camp. That'll spoil him for her." Sir John squeezed her shoulder, and his hand dropped to his side. "You can't let that happen," he said.
>
> (41-42)

When Georgia has completed her task, she exults, "We're all safe, all the decent, ordinary, hard-working people, the people who make England" (238). The England that Georgia saves is the same petty bourgeois populace that Blake portrayed as pretentious in ***A Question of Proof.*** Here, however, they are presented as heroic. These "decent, ordinary" people are the people

who help Georgia escape from the E.B.: the adventurous department store manager and the clerk from accounting, the pantechnicon [furniture van] drivers, and the vicar's wife (206-08, 209, 219). None of these people is "political" in terms of spouting platitudes, although the pantechnicon drivers are "staunch Trade Unionists" (207). The England that Georgia saves is the England of the middle class, an England that would resist Day-Lewis's communism to the end.

The pantechnicon drivers who save Georgia do so while talking about soccer (209). This conversation is a nice, realistic touch that breaks up the tension of the pantechnicon's journey. It also betrays one of Day-Lewis's least intellectual diversions. Day-Lewis was the only one of the "Auden Group" who had indulged in "the so-called Philistine world of games" while in school (Stanford 38). The pantechnicon drivers' interest in sport implies an interest in fair play.

Day-Lewis employs the sporting metaphor more than once, and the game that he usually uses is cricket. In ***A Question of Proof,*** Nigel discovers himself mentally eliminating Tiverton from the list of suspects because he is "a born cricketer" (116). In ***There's Trouble Brewing,*** Inspector Tollworthy is deemed a "good sort" because Herbert Cammison has played cricket with him (60). The best example of good sportsmanship, however, is Peter Braithwaite, the Test cricketer in ***The Smiler with the Knife.*** One of the noblest of Sir John's agents, Peter plays the spy "game" in the same way that he plays cricket; he's usually good, but he tends to take risks (151). Peter also plays both games fairly; that is, he "plays cricket." His motivation for the risk that costs him his life is the guilt that he feels for the death of Rosa Alvarez, a woman he seduced in order to learn the secrets of the E.B. When Peter realizes that his only hope of doing any damage to the E.B. is to blow up the munitions dump, he makes a mental note of his location, thankful that he will not have to hurt any innocent people. He takes his death as calmly as if it were merely the end of the game: "He'd take it standing up, not like those quitters grovelling against the wall over there" (157). The true Englishman is cool and sportsmanlike to the end, unlike the "quitters" and poor sports who make up the fascist conspiracy.

In ***The Corpse in the Snowman*** we are never allowed to forget that the novel takes place during wartime. The blackout is mentioned several times (14, 23) and is the means of ascertaining the time of Betty's death (58). Hereward and Charlotte have a motive for murdering Betty because they lost money during the invasion of Poland (86, 132), as did Eunice Ainsley (105). Betty discusses making a will because of the war (109), and Charlotte has been considering donating Easterham Manor for a hospital (110). Many of the characters are employed in some sort of work on the war: Georgia works on a refugees committee, Nigel is working on a "war diary" (12), and Hereward Restorick "[fiddles] about on war agriculture committees" but is really "half-demented because they won't let him back in his old regiment yet" (49). The tension at Easterham is compared to that of the war in Europe (48), and Nigel and Blount assume that Andrew and Bogan are probably still in the country because the war has made leaving the country extremely difficult (192). All of these war references set us up perfectly for Andrew Restorick's act of contrition: he goes off to Germany to "do as much damage as I can before they find me out" (176). His desire to hurt the power-hungry Germans parallels his murder of the power-hungry Dr. Bogan.

The most strongly worded criticisms of the complacency of Great Britain come from the would-be dictator in ***The Smiler with the Knife,*** Chilton Canteloe. He explains to Georgia that the British people's character is going to be their downfall. "Chillie" is going to be named "First Guardian of Public Safety," since "the English like the idea of being looked after, without having to admit any filial piety." He also foresees no problem in getting rid of any who oppose him: "Our countrymen dislike purges; but, in a state of emergency, they're willing to bury their heads in the sand and let someone else do their dirty work for them—provided it's done with all the legal paraphernalia, a chaplain in attendance, and officials to sign the document in triplicate" (178-79). The coldness of a bureaucracy that can depersonalize murder is also seen in Chillie's Plan A: it is described as being like "the prospectus of a respectable company" in its dryness and in "its cold, impersonal setting-out of detail, its translation of flesh-and-blood hopes, greed, fears, idealism, into an inhuman document" (189). A militaristic Fascist regime would have no room for the warm, emotional vagaries of humanity.

The emotional coldness of the power-mad Chillie (and the name *is* significant) is recreated in the blackmailing, drug-dispensing Dr. Bogan in ***The Corpse in the Snowman.*** Andrew Restorick takes a peculiar pleasure in being able to hide Bogan in a snowman: "I can't help feeling a lively satisfaction that that devil, with his ice-cold heart and his 'snow,' should have ended up in a snowman" (176). Both of these early Blake villains are emotionally cold, cold-blooded, and cold-hearted like the fascist regimes that they represent.

Nicholas Blake actually wrote six first novels, because of his own indecision about the kind of detective he wanted to create, the type of novel he wanted to write, and his own internal political conflicts. After six "first" novels, he had settled down, both politically and artistically, and was able to create a consistent Nigel Strangeways series.

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Albert Gelpi (essay date May-June 1998)

SOURCE: Gelpi, Albert. "Reading Day Lewis." *PN Review* 24, no. 5 (May-June 1998): 15-18.

[*In the following essay, Gelpi recounts the life and literary career of Day Lewis and praises the poet's "skilled and inventive command of metre and rhyme and stanza," as well as his ability to infuse "formal verse with the cadences of contemporary speech and the fractures of modern life," concluding that he is "a poet who belongs in the pantheon of modern poets."*]

'READ HIM': the last words of *Living in Time,* my critical study of C. Day Lewis's poetry, recently published by Oxford University Press. In adapting for my own purposes Pound's injunction to the reader about Eliot, I also used Pound's capital letters to convey my sense of urgency in the present situation. Let me try here to explain my urgency in less insistent, more discursive terms.

Critical winds over the shifting dunes of literary history are constantly levelling peaks and promontories and raising other ones, burying particular writers, genres, movements, periods for the nonce while elevating others to clear view and fresh inspection. In any given cultural moment readers, especially professional readers, are trained to map the given and current topography, but the shrewdest of us try to remain alert to how the changes in the prevailing winds are rearranging the literary topography and requiring a revised map.

During my professional life as critic of modern poetry the bold inventiveness of American poets of this century, especially its nervy, go-for-broke experimentalists, has focused attention away from what was going on in Britain. The innovations of Pound, Eliot, Williams, Stevens and Stein tended to make the generation of Hardy, Owen and Graves seem rather emotionally tame and formally old-fashioned, to most American observers and even some British observers. Between 1914 and 1918 Britain lost many talented writers on the battlefields of France, and in the post-war scene Yeats was Irish and over fifty, Hardy seemed a voice from the late Victorian period and Lawrence denounced the British tradition and took Whitman as his model. In the very years when Pound was pushing Imagism as a way into Modernism, the anthologies of *Georgian Poetry* were offering as evidence of a modern British poetry nothing more than a nerveless and flaccid imitation of nineteenth-century postures. Poetic Modernism left British poetry virtually untouched, so that from the American perspective especially it seemed too modest and self-defeated an exercise in cultural nostalgia.

By mid-century Donald Davie mounted a counter-attack on the American avant-garde in the name of (as his title ran) *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry.* Davie's polemic was a beacon-light, and the establishment of *PN Review* and Carcanet Press became pivotal events in energizing contemporary British poetry. However, at least as I read the situation, the territory remained pretty well undisturbed, the old map still accurate, until a constellation of developments in the wake of Samuel Hynes' *The Auden Generation* focused attention again on the 1930s. Valentine Cunningham's monumental study *British Writers of the Thirties,* Michael O'Neill and Gareth Reeves' *Auden, MacNeice, Spender,* Jon Stallworthy's biography of Louis MacNeice, Edward Mendelson's editions of Auden, the appearance of C. Day Lewis's complete poems have created a critical summons for us to reconfigure the map of the period, not from Pound's perspective or Davie's perspective, but with all the clarity and understanding we can bring to our present vantage points.

The 1930s had seemed a deliberately and firmly shut book; even Auden and Spender had revised or excised many of their poems of that period. Davie's often cited 'Remembering the Thirties' expressed the cool, ironic condescension of post-war poets towards their pre-war forebears (though Davie was consistently encouraging to me when I was undertaking the Day Lewis study). But Michael Roberts' anthologies, *New Country* (1932) and *New Country* (1933), had established the Auden group as the closest thing in British poetry to an avant-garde, no matter how *derrière* their poetic style seemed to the Americans. The Auden circle included in a loose and short-lived association Day Lewis, Spender, and MacNeice, all middle class and Oxford educated, who had separately come to know Auden in the late twenties and early thirties. Their names were derisively collapsed into 'Macspaunday' by the right-wing Roy Campbell in the hope that his caricature would deflate what he saw as their inflated reputation and influence. As a group they quickly got attention as the first significant movement which would shake British poetry free from the mire of Georgian convention.

Day Lewis's ***A Hope for Poetry*** (1934) was their manifesto for a poetry that was modern in diction, rhythm and imagery as well as theme but free of the élitist obscurantism of American Modernism. The experimentalists could scorn a popular audience, but the 'Macspaunday' poets sought popularity so that the infusion of familiar forms with new energies could not just engage the psychological stresses and public shocks of contemporary life but actually change them for the better. Consequently, against their training and ingrained inclinations, Day Lewis, Spender and Auden directly involved themselves in left-wing issues and activities, espousing a Marxist perspective with varying degrees of enthusiasm and commitment, and opposing the rise of fascism with unhesitating conviction. Even MacNeice, the youngest and least political of the group, found himself engaged with the mounting crisis by the decade's end.

The implosion of the quasi-religious political idealism of the left under the pressures of Stalinism and World War II ended that phase of these poets' careers and shut the book on the 1930s more effectively than the jealous jibes of right-wingers like Campbell. But that closure had unfortunate consequences: it eclipsed their serious and honourable effort to forge a political, even revolutionary poetry, and it created a sense of truncated or anticlimatic careers for all except Auden, as if they had not gone on to separate careers after 'Macspaunday'. Auden's poetic brilliance and his voluble domination of any discussion in which he was involved made him from the outset, in his estimation as well as that of the others in the group and the reigning critics of the day, the star figure. The others were very different poets who deserved to be read on their own terms. However, the focus on Auden during the 1930s carried over because of the publicity and controversy attendant on his ill-timed departure from Britain in 1939 at the outbreak of the war and because of interest in his new poetic life in the very different literary climate of New York. Thus in a curious way Auden's survival of the Thirties tended unfairly to marginalize the later careers of the other three, and in fact post-war poets on the rise like Davie and Larkin wanted to keep them on the margins.

These cultural factors had a particularly harmful effect on Day Lewis's standing after 1950. MacNeice withdrew again into his rueful, elegantly-turned combination of classical stoicism and post-romantic angst and was often in the US before his relatively early death in 1963. Spender increasingly withdrew from poetry into a public career as a popular lecturer, editor, critic on both sides of the Atlantic. But in staying the course Day Lewis found that his reputation as the Reddest of the 'Macspaunday' poets returned to stigmatize his career as a very different poet after the war. The attention that the handsome young rebel attracted earned him enemies—literary as well as political—and some of them hounded him for the rest of his days.

The most relentless foe was Geoffrey Grigson, editor of *New Verse,* the most influential poetic journal of the decade. After initially publishing Day Lewis, Grigson turned against him by mid-decade and jeered in review after review, in later years under the cover of anonymity in the *Times Literary Supplement.* When Sean Day Lewis, writing his father's biography, asked Grigson to explain his seemingly pathological animus, Grigson denied any feelings except aesthetic ones in disliking Day Lewis's poems. But the venom of those reviews smacks of personal bile, and it intensified to the point where Samuel Hynes called Grigson's comments on Day Lewis's last volume a 'literary mugging'. But I rehearse this ugly story because Grigson merely expressed more virulently a general hostility—more than indifference—to Day Lewis in the post-war literary climate that is very hard to comprehend. By this time, despite his critics, Day Lewis had become very much a public literary figure on the BBC, in platform readings, on the lecture circuit—and so had become a cheap and easy target for the current generation of poets and critics. The distinctions he had won over the years—professorships at Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard, honours from the palace, crowned by the laureateship in 1968—sealed his reputation as a representative of the establishment, despite his long hours in failing health spent in efforts to support young artists. In the decade after his death, when I was proposing to various publishers a complete poems of Day Lewis, a senior editor of a prominent publishing house not only responded with his own categorical lack of interest but added gratuitously that he did not think such a book *ought* to be published.

So when the handsome volume of ***Complete Poems,*** edited by Day Lewis's widow Jill Balcon, appeared at last in 1992 twenty years after his death, I seized it as the propitious time for the revisionist study that I had been preparing to write for more years than I liked to recall. I had met Day Lewis at Harvard, where he came as the Norton Professor of Poetry for the academic year 1964-5. We became immediate friends despite the twenty-seven years between our ages; I am in fact one month older than his oldest son Sean. He asked graciously if he could attend my course on American poets, because he wanted to hear about old favourites like Dickinson and Whitman from an American viewpoint and wanted in particular to learn more about the moderns. I know that the challenge of his presence—his noble, seamed face alight with response off on the far right of the student audience—made my lectures more focused and concentrated. His almost defensive modesty about his own achievement masked his pain about the neglect it suffered in Britain, and to my humbled astonishment he invited me to write about his poetry if I ever felt so inclined.

I was deeply honoured by his trust, but I felt unable to assume that responsibility right away. For one thing, I had already conceived the critical history of the American poetic tradition which has been the central concern of my professional and academic life; the two long volumes in print each took ten years in the midst of teaching duties and other scholarly projects. But my sense of deficiency also kept me from the Day Lewis book for many years: I needed to know more about the poetry and yet to have sufficient personal and critical distance from it, and I also needed to feel my way into a literary history and cultural ambience—not just in the 1930s but during the war years and afterwards—very different from the American circumstances I knew well. I had been teaching at Stanford since 1968, and, alongside other projects, was steadily educating myself to the task at hand. During summers I read in journals and periodicals at the British Library and consulted Day Lewis materials there and at King's College, Cambridge. After his death in 1972 Jill Balcon and Sean Day Lewis were unhesitatingly generous in making available to me the unpublished papers in their possession, while leaving the shape and direction of the book entirely in my hands. When the ***Complete Poems*** finally appeared, what first began as a review spontaneously opened into the book I had been planning to undertake.

Obviously it is not my job to make the final judgement but equally obvious is my hope that *Living in Time* will win Day Lewis a whole new audience and allow readers to see his career afresh and as a whole—beyond the 1930s and beyond his brief association with Auden during his last year at Oxford and in the years just after. The structure of the book fell naturally into three long chapters on the poetry of the Thirties, the Forties, and the later years, and since the poetry is strongly autobiographical in its sources without being 'confessional' in the later mode of Lowell and Ginsberg, the chapters constellated around the three women central to those periods of his life: his first wife Mary King, whom he married late in 1928 while beginning a teaching career and working on his breakthrough book, ***Transitional Poem,*** and who bore Sean and Nicholas by mid-decade; the novelist Rosamond Lehmann, with whom he had an intense liaison through the 1940s; and Jill Balcon, the actress who became his second wife in 1951 and the mother of Tamasin and Daniel.

In a letter Keats suggests that every artist in some way writes his or her life into a kind of 'allegory'. Day Lewis was in his own 'allegorical' way a child of the century. The circumstances and displacements and aspirations of his life take on in his poetry a configuration that also illuminates his time and place. Born in the rural west of Ireland, his father an Anglo-Irish pastor, his mother dead from his fourth year, he was brought to England to grow up in various parishes in London and then in Nottinghamshire. Too young for military service, he belonged to the generation coming to a sense of identity in the wake of war; he was an agnostic by the time he entered Wadham College, but remained, to adapt his phrase for his favourite poet Hardy, a 'Churchy agnostic'. At Oxford, he studied classics, began publishing poems, and edited *Oxford Poetry 1927* with his new chum Auden.

Transitional Poem marked his emergence from early Georgian mannerisms into a modern poetry to address the psychological and political crises of the Depression years. He supported his family in a Devonshire cottage by teaching at a nearby boys' school, but in his poetry he poured his lapsed Christian belief into faith in a materialist society of love and justice. Even at the risk of succumbing to propaganda, he remained determined to try to provide the words and images for the collectivist vision. Some, Grigson among them, saw him as more naïve and sentimental in his politics than Auden and even Spender, and chortled over the clumsy Marxist allegory ***Noah and the Waters,*** in which the biblical Flood became the rising Red tide. But in my view it is to his credit that, instead of shilly-shallying in bourgeois-liberal ambivalences, he set himself, more resolutely than Auden or Spender, to test out the rôle of the left-wing poet with all the will and resources at his command. In the effort he wrote some of the most bathetic and propagandistic verses, but also some of the most moving and memorable political poems of the period: among them, ***The Magnetic Mountain,*** **'The Conflict', 'In Me Two Worlds', 'A Time to Dance', 'The Nabara'.**

By the end of the decade, however, he knew the experiment had failed and found himself near despair (though he never recanted his idealism or turned Tory, as others

did, but remained to the end a Labour socialist). The oppressive rigours of the Party line, the reports of trials and purges and massive executions in the Soviet Union, the loss of Spain to the fascists under Franco, the mutual defence pact between Hitler and Stalin, the imminent outbreak of the Second World War—all these factors drove home his growing conviction that Party loyalty was coarsening his imagination and betraying his linguistic powers. Moreover, political and poetic disillusionment was deepened by the erosion of his marriage through the political fervour which Mary did not share and through her own emotional and sexual withdrawal into the maternal role. When he left Devon for a wartime job in London at the Ministry of Information, he found himself facing not just the terrors of the blitz but unforeseen explosions in his personal life as well.

An encounter with Rosamond Lehmann during an air raid ignited a passionate affair that would carry them through the war to the end of the decade. If Marx was Day Lewis' prophet in the Thirties, Lawrence supplanted him in the Forties. Day Lewis' romantic temperament led him to substitute faith in Eros for faith in Communism and to seek in sexual love the self-fulfilment and self-transcendence he did not find in collective action—even though the pursuit of Eros forced him into a duplicitous and guilty double life between Mary and Rosamond that left him in the end close to physical and moral collapse. The stresses and the emotional extremes of exaltation and self-hatred gave the poems of the forties a mordant edge and sometimes savage intensity—in **'Married Dialogue', 'The Image', 'Departure in the Dark', 'Love and Pity', 'The Neurotic'**—unlike anything in his previous work. By all accounts the sonnet sequence **'O Dreams! O Destinations!'** and **'Elegy Before Death'** are among Day Lewis' most powerful and accomplished poems.

However, though **'Elegy Before Death'** is a sublime and poignant celebration of Rosamond, its title indicates that this summing-up anticipates the end. His meeting with Jill Balcon seemed to him an unexpected life-line, and their immediate love for each other provided the impetus to break the deadlock between Rosamond's hold on him and the claims of Mary and their now adolescent sons. A painful divorce from Mary and a stormy farewell to Rosamond opened the way for him to marry Jill, many years his junior, on his forty-seventh birthday. He hoped for a quiet and contemplative domesticity with Jill, and by the close of the 1950s they were settled with their children in a lovely Georgian house in Greenwich, with family vacations each September back in the west of Ireland. The upheavals of the previous decades had borne in upon him harshly the limits of human aspiration and the folly of violating what remained realizable. The flawless, deceptively simple execution of **'Sheepdog Trials at Hyde Park', 'The Gate',** and **'On Not Saying Everything'** demonstrate their meaning in their performance: the uses of form and convention in life and in art as a mode of living in time.

But Day Lewis' middle age was not to offer meditative solace for long. Beginning in 1965 a series of serious illnesses, ending in cancer, shadowed his last years with pain and mounting weakness before his death in 1972, a month after his sixty-eighth birthday. The late poetry records these hard years of diminishing possibility: acknowledging tragic mortality in poems like **'Elegy for a Woman Unknown',** savouring the small epiphanies of the mortal moment in **'Saint Anthony's Shirt', 'Merry-Go-Round', 'A Privileged Moment',** and **'At Lemmons',** this last written on his deathbed. These are some of his best poems, indeed some of the most beautiful, heartbreaking poems about ageing and dying in the language.

What made this life in poetry into a significant and memorable 'allegory' is of course Day Lewis' skilled and inventive command of metre and rhyme and stanza: a virtuosity comparable to Hardy's and Auden's. This piece is too short to illustrate how Day Lewis reinformed formal verse with the cadences of contemporary speech and the fractures of modern life, but *Living in Time* makes the case through detailed analyses of a number of poems, early, middle and late. So 'READ HIM' not just within but beyond the Auden circle and the Thirties, and see if you don't discover, or rediscover, Day Lewis as a poet who belongs in the pantheon of modern poets.

Eavan Boland (essay date May-June 1998)

SOURCE: Boland, Eavan. "A Lyric Voice at Bay." *PN Review* 24, no. 5 (May-June 1998): 18-20.

[*In the following essay, Boland comments on Day Lewis's literary career and artistic merit, asserting that his "was a tender, unsavage, lyrical sensibility, stranded outside the courts and centuries and systems of faith where they might have prospered."*]

Critics work in a text. Biographers work in the foreground and the background. And the critic's work is made much harder when the background has been overwritten by events, interpretations and frank and forgetful prejudice. At that point the critic has to do some double-jobbing in order to rescue the text from the biographical background and the reader's resistance.

Albert Gelpi has set himself a hard task.[1] Cecil Day Lewis, at least at first glance, is a decidedly awkward subject. Before reading this book I would have said

Day Lewis was a refugee from the 1930s: and Anglo-Irish Georgian, who admired Tom Moore and consorted with Auden. A gentlemanly Communist. A hopelessly lyric inhabitant of a hard-driving decade. A poet who didn't so much lose his identity as have it handed to him in fragments: national, poetic, political. I suspect I shared my lack of real knowledge with other poetry readers: Day Lewis, I am reluctant to admit, had fallen so far below the horizon of my interest that I had ceased to enquire too much whether my views were based on instinct or just a blunt lack of reading.

And yet I should have enquired. Apart from anything else—and in a very slight way I was acquainted with him: he came to Dublin at the end of the 1960s and I interviewed him. Without having the exact words, I sensed both the grace and malaise behind the courteous, epigrammatic façade. The interview was in a hotel on Dawson Street. We drank coffee. He spoke fluently, modestly, anecdotally into a tape recorder. And, in some elusive way, he seemed to suit this environment; to fit into this remnant of the garrison city which Louis MacNeice had chastized in 'Autumn Journal': 'Nelson on his pillar / Watching his world collapse'. In conversation about himself, Day Lewis was a charming, self-caricaturing man. He spoke in a club-room British accent. He was self-deprecating and funny. But in his invisible, and obdurate resistance to anything of high seriousness—especially a view of poetry—it was just possible to detect his own private, and perhaps painful, collapsing world. I came away interested, charmed and puzzled. This was not exactly the poet of his poetry: this gracious, displaced intelligence. Or was it? It seemed more edgy, more articulate. Lacking the information to answer the question, I lost the interest. Now here is the information, and suddenly the questions seem fascinating again.

In his introduction, Albert Gelpi sets out to address the prejudices of his readers even before they happen:

> This revisionary study of Day-Lewis's poetry seeks to distinguish his voice within 'MacSpaunday' during the thirties and then follow its development in the remaining thirty years of his career, and it seeks to accomplish this large task with something still of the coherence and integrity of a long essay.
>
> A close reading will show that, striking as Day Lewis's work from the thirties remains, much of his best work came later, especially during and after the war in the forties, and in his last years. As often happens, since his death in 1972, Day Lewis's poetry has largely fallen from notice or discussion, and a combination of factors—the vocal opposition of enemies he made during the Thirties and after, the aura of faded respectability that the laureateship rightly or wrongly brings with it, the snotty ideological opposition of contemporary Post-structuralists to structured form and the lyric speaker in poetry—has contributed to the recent neglect of his work. However the publication of the ***Complete Poems,*** edited by Jill Balcon, the poet's widow, in Britain and the United States in 1992 has provided the occasion and impetus for me to undertake a reassessment that will confirm his place as one of the major British poets of the century.

This is a forceful claim. Did I come away persuaded? Not completely. Even after reading the book, Day Lewis still seems to me too uneven, too fractured in diction, style, formal control—flaws that suggest a deeper imaginative indecision—to bear the full weight of this assessment. But my sense of his journey as a poet has radically changed from reading this. My sense of sequences like ***The Magnetic Mountain***—a beautiful, commanding series—is entirely altered. I also came away convinced that a poet like Day Lewis is a crucial part of the story of poetry in this century: a figure around which some of the most poignant conflicts of voice, form and stance all swirled.

But it needs to be said at once here that the power and distinction of this book are not conditional on the reader's acceptance of this view. Not at all. Albert Gelpi has written extensively on American poetry across a wider register of style and purpose—perhaps with a colder eye—and he is a true authority on the romantic stance and the lyric voice. His commentary on Day Lewis is as shrewd and fascinating a study of a lyric voice at bay as any I have read. The enduring value of this book is that it opens up a dialogue about poetry in this century which goes well beyond its subject and enters volatile areas of the poet's identity and the poetic voice.

Cecil Day Lewis was born in County Laois in 1904 when it was still Queen's County. He grew up in the ambiguity and shelter of an Anglo-Irish identity. But only just. His father was a Church of Ireland clergyman. His grandfather, more interestingly, had been in the soap business: the adopted son of a Dublin merchant. His roots therefore were in the instability of the Irish garrison class: a caste whose loyalty to another culture was painfully offset by its tendency to internalize the local one.

My own mother, who once met Day Lewis in a London house, told me how extravagantly he had admired Tom Moore in conversation. It's a small anecdote, but revealing. Tom Moore—the musical, heartless charlatan who fled Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century, only to adorn and lament it in British drawing rooms for the rest of his life, who did indeed write poems which were a breviary of his disaffection and regret. A template of complex and hurtful identities?

This book follows a critical-biographical route through the poems, the letters, the life. Valuable new information is noted in the acknowledgements, where Sean Day Lewis is credited as having 'generously made available

to me all the unpublished papers and manuscripts in his possession'. The student life at Oxford, the literary life in London, the visits to Ireland and abroad are all chronicled. Including Day Lewis's year as Charles Eliot Norton lecturer at Harvard in 1964, which is where Albert Gelpi first met him when he was an assistant professor. 'The differences in age and culture and experience somehow worked to kindle the regard and friendship we instantly felt for each other and found for each other.' This generous and essential book has it origins in that meeting.

In the first chapters, Albert Gelpi briskly takes up the story of Day Lewis's first years at Oxford, his private printing of ***Beechen Vigil and Other Poems*** in 1925, and his meeting with Auden when both were about twenty one. It is an important story. The decade of the Thirties lay ahead. The political urgency was not yet manifest. Nevertheless, British poetry was at a strange crossroads of styles and choices which are just about visible now, but which this book restores to a fuller context.

In 1927 Auden and Day Lewis jointly edited *Oxford Poetry 1927.* Their preface, poised between manifesto and braggadocio, spoke of 'a progression towards a new synthesis'. 'Day Lewis and Auden,' writes Gelpi, 'acknowledged the need to implicate the artwork in actual social "conditions", however violent, even at the risk of the poem's urnlike, jarlike integrity, because "Pure Art", were such a thing possible, would constitute an unethical and irresponsible aestheticism.'

His further emphasis here is on the forms they chose. In an interesting statement, and one at the heart of the argument in this book, he writes: 'British poets continue to have the sense of predecessors and peers and audience that American poets have never enjoyed. So instead of violating grammatical and metrical coherence as Pound, Stein and Williams seemed to be doing, they set out—as Day Lewis does in this first section of ***Transitional Poem***—to charge sentences with fresh diction and charge metres with fresh rhythms.'

But Day Lewis and Auden were not just formal mediators. They were also witnesses to an extraordinary disintegration: the Georgian vision had failed, and with it the reach and confidence of the English pastoral. The two young men who met in 1924 were only a decade away from the carnage of the Second World War. Auden understood this particularly well. He understood that an England had died at the Somme and Ypres which could never be resuscitated. He understood that the vision of that England was impaired beyond nostalgia or lyricism. He understood, when he wrote '*Consider this and in our time / As the hawk sees it or the helmeted airman*', that he was writing a new and more sinister—and finally more sustaining—British nature poem. He understood that British poetry, from then on, would be a post-imperial poetry, with all the pain and darkness consequent on that.

What did Day Lewis understand? A more melancholy, and far less ironic sensibility than Auden, he may have understood something entirely different. I am not even sure he could have availed of the same acute sense of loss which Auden did. Throughout his life, the displacement Day Lewis struggled with in his poetry was not England's, and not mankind's, but his own. This Irish-born Romantic, lost in the age he inherited, lost in the modernist idioms around him—as Auden certainly was not—faltered in his attempts to locate himself. His first struggle with his isolation involved him in the determined effort to end it.

Hence the 1930s and 'social change' and the Communist party. All this makes for wonderful reading. Albert Gelpi's sympathetic and enlightening study of the poetry Day Lewis wrote during the thirties turns up some fascinating results. After ***From Feathers to Iron,*** The Hogarth Press published ***The Magnetic Mountain*** in 1933. It is a sequence of thirty-six lyrics, and just about all of Gelpi's strongest advocacy seems justified here. These are crisp quatrains, perfectly cut off, the diction salty and true, the language economic and the volume turned up just right on the rhymes. For doubters like me, these are wonderful lines to recover:

> Somewhere beyond the railheads
> Of reason, south or north,
> Lies a magnetic mountain
> Riveting sky to earth.
>
> No line is laid so far.
> Ties rusting in a stack
> And sleepers—dead men's bones—
> Mark a defeated track.
>
> Kestrel who yearly changes
> His tenement of space
> At the last hovering
> May signify that place.
>
> Iron in the soul,
> Spirit steeled in fire,
> Needle trembling on truth—
> These shall draw me there.

'The reader can see from the outside an honest relationship developing between biographer and subject.' This comment by Richard Holmes on the drama of biography is specially apt. As this book continues, it modulates subtly from the extended essay Albert Gelpi spoke of writing, to a critical portrait with the best qualities of traditional biography. In that late and lamented art—I mean biography—the critical and documentary aspects were not severed from each other. They remain one and the same here, as the book progresses from Day Lewis's

engagement and disillusion with the Communist Party, his failing marriage, to his work in the 1940s and 1950s—***Poems in Wartime*** and ***Word Over All,*** and his prose studies, including ***The Poetic Image.*** In the process, this also becomes an essay on poetry in our time: its themes and choices and quandaries.

Day Lewis's later years are at once the most interesting to read about and the least persuasive poetically. I find it hard, if not impossible, to share Albert Gelpi's opinion of the poetry of the 1940s and 1950s. I wanted to like these poems better than I did. While these later chapters uncover some fascinating details about a postwar British literary world, they also raise through many quotations more difficult and poignant questions about Day Lewis's technical command. This is a rich and formidable part of this book: the scholarship is deft and the glimpses of a life in its time—to paraphrase the title—makes for powerful reading. All this is information recovered for future scholarship which is truly invaluable. But the poems lag behind. Despite the formidable and graceful advocacy they receive, they never seem—unlike in the earlier sections—to emerge from the strange fracture between a talky off-balance tone, and an unearned transcendental lyricism.

Certainly, the advocacy is unswerving. And another reader may be less resistant. Gelpi follows Day Lewis's progress through a new marriage, through the opening up of different themes and the enrichment of an inner poise. He shadows him through the publication of such books as ***Pegasus and Other Poems*** in 1957 and the memoir ***The Buried Day*** and then ***The Room and Other Poems,*** right up to ***The Whispering Roots and Other Poems*** in 1970.

I was completely convinced about the Thirties: the shadow, finally, which hung over Day Lewis's work was not Auden's, nor the more corporate shadow of 'MacSpaunday' as Roy Campbell bitingly referred to it. The Thirties poets were those, in Campbell's words, who 'made the Mealy Mouth and Bulging Purse / The hallmark of Contemporary Verse'. Albert Gelpi is particularly shrewd in extricating Day Lewis from this muddle of associations and echoes. 'I don't think we were the same kind of poets,' said Day Lewis towards the end of his life.

The real shadow over Day Lewis—since it isn't the Thirties—is harder to estimate. But it lasted long past the Thirties. It shows in some of the unconvincing lyricism of the later work, like **'Saint Anthony's Shirt'** quoted here. And indeed many of the later poems. What is the problem with them? To start with, there is the awkward half-formal, half-chatty type of lineation he used. The poet who plunged into the collectivist spirit of the Thirties, never quite extricated the confident, obsessive and solitary voice which Auden kept throughout. Auden developed a voice which could both subvert and travel with the line, toppling it into irony and recovering it for song.

But these I think are symptoms of a deeper disquiet. Having subsumed his painful conflicts of identity in the collective excitements and commitments of the Thirties, an uneasy and deeply displaced sensibility emerged from it. And a self-doubting one. The self-doubts were generous: they were poetic, not simply personal. The lyric shadow of De la Mare and Georgian England still unsettled Day Lewis. He lacked the sexual disaffection which made Auden towards the end of his life—in a contradictory and yet consistent way—a coterie poet. He lacked the irony which turned MacNeice into a cold and melodious dissident. His was a tender, unsavage, lyrical sensibility, stranded outside the courts and centuries and systems of faith where they might have prospered.

But enough of carping. This is a superb book. It will remain absolutely essential reading for anyone who wants to understand British poetry in this century. Although Albert Gelpi remains an unswerving advocate of Day Lewis's work throughout, and that is his self-chosen priority, he is also diligent as a Virgilian guide—sceptical and informative—through an underworld of twentieth century poetry. His comments on American poetry and its differences from the formal concerns of a British generation are particularly interesting. Above all, Albert Gelpi's humane and enlightening commentary serves as a reminder of something it is all too easy to lose sight of in the present climate: that the critic, scholar, reader of poems and lover of poetry can still be one and indivisible.

Notes

1. Albert Gelpi, *Living in Time: The Poetry of C. Day Lewis* (Oxford University Press)

Albert Gelpi (essay date 1998)

SOURCE: Gelpi, Albert. "'On Not Saying Everything': Poetry and Thanatos, 1950-1972." In *Living in Time: The Poetry of C. Day Lewis,* pp. 145-217. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

[*In the following excerpt, Gelpi studies Day Lewis's writings, both poetry and prose, from the years 1950 to his death in 1972, bringing to bear biographical information, such as his failing relationship with Rosamond Lehmann and his new affair with a much younger woman, Jill Balcon, to his work and stressing how his sense of approaching death altered his orientation to his craft as a poet.*]

In the 1951 Preface to his Penguin ***Selected Poems,*** Day Lewis issued to readers a mock warning that "in the view of some critics, my verse has deteriorated since the early 'school of social consciousness' days into an anti-social or at any rate a-social preoccupation with the past and with traditional forms" (7). And certainly Day Lewis had come a long way from his stance in the thirties when, in the Yeats essay [**"W. B. Yeats and Human Dignity"**], he asked rhetorically whether we wish merely "to measure human dignity by the average rather than by the best, . . . to render the Common Man's self-esteem more complacent still by praising 'the new narcissism of the also-ran'" (76). But the point here is less about class than about the numbingly complacent conformity of modern mass culture. He, like Arnold a century before, wanted to insist that the decline of old aristocratic notions did not leave us without criteria of excellence and value, without norms of action and behavior in the mass society that Arnold feared and that eventuated in the post-war welfare state. In public life Marxism had not proved a sustainable substitute for the Christian faith he had lost in adolescence, nor had eroticism proved a sustainable substitute in private life. But Day Lewis continued to reformulate the secular humanism that in one form and another has grounded art and culture from the Enlightenment (at least till the Postmodernism of the last few decades).

Though at times Keats would feel compelled to conclude resignedly that poetry "is not so fine a thing as philosophy—For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth," his life's vocation actually proceeded from the postulation of another, admittedly less absolute, more relative source of truth: "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth" (*Letters* 1: 184 & 2: 81). Keats goes on to reiterate the point in another letter: through the empathetic creativity of the Imagination each person's life composes "a continual allegory," "figurative" of its own "Mystery." The moral and psychological function of the Imagination, then, is to turn the world of experience from "a vale of tears" into a "vale of Soul-making." Moreover, Keats goes on to speculate, this process whereby we come to "acquire identities, till each one is personally itself" may envision "a grander system of salvation than the chrysteain [*sic*] religion" (2: 67, 102).

More than a century after Keats, Day Lewis felt uncomfortable with spelling imagination with a capital "I" or mystery with a capital "M" or soul with a capital "S." Nevertheless, these remained resonant words for him, and, however reduced the terms of negotiation, he remained committed to the process of soul making through engagement with the world in language. In one of his last major public addresses on poetry, at the University of Hull in 1968, he quoted several passages from Keats's letters, including the description of the poet's negative capability and the expression of faith in "the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination," with the telling comment: "[I]n his letters [Keats] came to the very core of a poet's nature and of the kind of poetry with which we, still in the shadow of the Romantic Revival, are most familiar" (***A Need for Poetry?*** 10). As Day Lewis moved through and past his middle years, this "Churchy agnostic" was drawn more and more strongly to "the discipline of creative meditation" that mediated "the truth of Imagination" and to associate such mediation with the craft of poetry.

* * *

Looking both ways, the poetry that Day Lewis began to write in the fifties tested out the possibilities of such mediation and meditation as it assessed the permanent scars and lingering pains left by the recent, still smarting amputations. The publication of ***An Italian Visit,*** waiting for years upon Rosamond Lehmann's reluctant permission to include the sequence's central piece, **"Elegy Before Death,"** had to be delayed until January 1953, and the ***Collected Poems 1954*** honored Day Lewis's fiftieth birthday by bringing together (except for his excision of the last part of **"A Time to Dance"** and all but two choruses of ***Noah and the Waters***) twenty years of work from ***Transitional Poem*** through ***An Italian Visit.*** But during these years poems for the next volume were beginning to accumulate and coalesce into ***Pegasus and Other Poems,*** published in 1957 with a dedication "To Jill."

Meanwhile, publication of Day Lewis's translation of *The Aeneid of Virgil* in 1952 had preceded these books. Productive reengagement with Virgil provided a welcome focus during the traumatic years just before and after the divorce from Mary, the breakup with Rosamond, and marriage to Jill. In 1949 the BBC had approached him about following up his successful version of the ***Georgics*** [***The Georgics of Vergil***] with passages from the *Aeneid* for radio broadcast. By the next year the project was extended into a verse translation of the entire poem for broadcast, one book at a time, in dramatic readings by a cast of actors on the BBC's Third Programme. The extravaganza was conceived as an event in the yearlong Festival of Britain. The epic and nationalistic character of the poem seemed suitable to this all-out effort to herald Britain's economic (and cultural) emergence into the booming postwar world. Day Lewis could be ironic in letters and conversation about his contribution to this nationwide huckstering, but in fact the translation of the *Aeneid* allowed Day Lewis's genuinely patriotic feelings (which the ***Georgics*** had served to clarify at the beginning of the war) and his longstanding love of the heroic to express themselves at a time when the dislocations in his personal life had created some interference with lyric expression.

By the time he began his life with Jill Balcon, he was already working steadily on the line-for-line translation into loose English hexameters, consulting regularly with the classical scholar W. F. Jackson Knight (to whom he dedicated the translation), and he had completed the remarkable feat of rendering all twelve books before broadcasting began in June 1951. Over the years, Day Lewis's version, in several published editions, has become probably the most widely read translation of Virgil's epic in the century.

The autobiographical resonances at least of the early books of the *Aeneid* could not have been lost on the translator. The stormy scenes between Aeneas and Queen Dido—she distraught with the proud outrage of rejected love, he steeled at last in his determination to abandon her—must have recalled the recent confrontations with Rosamond Lehmann, though in fact Day Lewis wrote Dido's lines with Jill Balcon's voice in mind. In the production, however, she was cast, more appropriately perhaps than the director at the BBC knew, in the role of Venus, the goddess of love, who as Aeneas's mother and patroness maneuvers to rescue him from punishment by his enemy Juno, whose vengeful ire against him has been deepened by her sympathy for Dido.

The translation of the *Aeneid,* therefore, comes at a turning point in Day Lewis's personal and poetic life. Steeped as he was in the epic narrative and its classical context, he found himself drawn to narrative poetry and wrote a suite of four poems whose mythological themes allowed him the frame to examine the traumas of the previous period. The poems, each three to four pages long in loose pentameters reminiscent of the loose hexameters of the *Aeneid,* compose Part One of the ***Pegasus*** [***Pegasus and Other Poems***] volume and, in effect, open the way into the new phase of his poetry. The poems are not translations or academic exercises in versified paraphrase. On the contrary, the ways in which Day Lewis adapted the myths—omitting, adding, shifting perspective—reveal the thematic point of his telling. For Day Lewis, as for Pound and H. D., myth served as a strategy for distancing—and thence for handling—volatile autobiographical materials. For them mythological figures embodied states of mind and feeling, and mythic stories were psychodramas seeking to resolve their moral and emotional conflicts. Day Lewis's Ovidian legends present four cautionary tales on various kinds of "marriage" and explore aspects of the erotic theme that had become the obsessive concern of the poetry of the forties. In important ways their thematic development prefigured and set the course of the next two decades.

In a poem from ***Pegasus*** cited in the previous section Day Lewis said through the persona of George Meredith: "Betrayal is always a self-betrayal / Where love is concerned" (505). "Ariadne on Naxos" pursues the twists of betrayal and self-betrayal to a possible resolution. Ariadne has betrayed her own father through her passion for Theseus and then connived with Theseus to slay her half-brother, the dreaded and monstrous Minotaur, only thereafter to be abandoned by Theseus on the island of Naxos. Most of the Ariadne poem is the monologue of her lament and self-accusation: violence begetting violence, victor victimized in turn. Contemplating the self-perpetuating succession of human betrayals, Eudora Welty invoked another myth to exemplify this pattern: "Endless the Medusa, and Perseus endless" (*The Golden Apples,* 243). But here, in contrast to the tragic fatality of Welty's phrase, Day Lewis is intent on imagining through Ariadne the possibility of breaking the chain of violent betrayals. The very first line of the poem deliberately places her monologue "between the hero's [that is, Theseus's] going and the god's [that is, Dionysus's] coming" to rescue her (494). For in the crucial "between" of the poem Ariadne undergoes a redemptive change that allows Dionysus's arrival at the end. Ariadne's tragedy as perpetrator and victim, far from confirming her in blood-vengeance, arouses in her instead an understanding that enables forgiveness and self-forgiveness:

> What is this word
> The bushes are whispering to the offshore breeze?
> 'Forget'? No. Tell me again. 'Forgive.' A soft word.
> I'll try it on my tongue. Forgive. Forgive . . .
> How strangely it lightens a bedevilled heart!
>
> (496-97)

The need to forgive and be forgiven for betrayals and self-betrayals, for injuries done and received has haunted Day Lewis's poetry for over a decade, as in this final stanza of **"It Would Be Strange"** (from ***Word Over All***):

> It would be more than strange
> If the devil we raised to avenge our envy, grief,
> Weakness, should take our hand like a prince and raise us
> And say, 'I forgive'.
>
> (330)

The lines from "Ariadne on Naxos" echo the ones above and bring them to fulfillment. **"It Would Be Strange"** speaks from the erotic contortions of the early forties, but in the later poem, written for his new wife, Ariadne is his persona in coming to a realization of the redemptive possibilities of forgiveness. She sees that the "dead, piteous monster," despite the yearly "slaughter of the innocents" in his cave, was himself a victim who needed and deserved to be loved, her blood brother and now, through her treachery, her brother in blood:

> Come, lay
> Your muzzle on my forsaken breast, and let us

> Comfort each other. There shall be no more blood,
> No more blood.
>
> (497)

William Faulkner's *Light in August* speaks of the need for all sinful mortals to strive for "that peace in which to sin and be forgiven which is the life of man" (461). Ariadne has come to a similar understanding when as sister-turned-mother to the Minotaur she says to the grotesque form she imagines cradled in her embrace:

> Our lonely isle expands
> Into a legend where all can dream away
> Their crimes and wounds, all victims learn from us
> How to redeem the Will that made them so.
>
> (497)

As in Greek drama, the Will that seems like Fate, cursing generation after generation, may in fact be changed by nothing more than a frail and guilty individual's change of heart or will. Ariadne at least reaches a peaceful sleep, "between death and birth," in which "no victim cried / Revenge," and the crepuscular "between" shifts to a daybreak in which she wakes to her own hierogamy, "seeing the god bend down / And oVer a hoop of stars, her bridal crown" (497). Ariadne experiences what the poet hopes for: a catharsis that will release him into a wiser, humbler selfhood in his new marriage. The poem, therefore, strategically ends with the hierogamy with Dionysus and excises the aftermath. In the myth, after rescuing Ariadne from Naxos, Dionysus abandons her to her own fate. However, in omitting a conclusion that would seem to confirm Welty's fated repetition of violence, Day Lewis is leaving the outcome open to Faulkner's ameliorative forgiveness.

"Baucis and Philemon" is adapted from Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* and, in the configuration of Day Lewis's four marriage myths, it presents, in explicit contrast to Ariadne and Theseus and in unacknowledged but implicit contrast to Ariadne and Dionysus, a true marriage that has sustained the humble, compassionating couple through long years of domesticity: "There was love in the shine / Of the copper pans, the thrift of a mended coverlet, / The scrubbed and sabbath face of the elmwood table" (490). The line, early in the poem, "In this evening light their wall is a hoop of gold" makes the connection back to the "hoop of stars" that crowned Ariadne's epiphany and changes it to the marriage bond of Baucis and Philemon. In fact, after basking in the glow of their hearth, the visiting gods reward the enduring love of the Hardyesque couple by joining them in death as a pair of trees, root and branch forever intertwined outside their cottage. For the fifty-year-old Day Lewis, the myth idealizes a settled domesticity that his younger self found wanting with Mary at Box Cottage and Brimclose, but that he now sought in his second marriage.

However, Day Lewis unsettles the outcome by interpolating an extraneous "modern" theme, counterpointing the sanctification of domesticity with the existential angst of the aging mortal at the seeming futility of human striving. Before the arrival of the divine visitors, Baucis intuits her husband's unspoken despair that despite their love "the works and days of his hands" have made only "a beaten path / Leading nowhere and soon to be overgrown" (490). Day Lewis has the disguised Zeus reconcile Philemon to living in time because memory holds and restores to consciousness "the good works and days of your own hands." (The phrase "works and days" recalls Hesiod's ancient poem and implicitly his *Theogony.*) Philemon undergoes an instantaneous and unconvincing metamorphosis; he says that the power of memory to retrieve the past from oblivion changes his "despair into a cup full of blessings": "Oh, chime and charm / Of remembered Junes, of killer frosts returning / To smile and be forgiven!" (492-93). Mutability and the vanity of time are age-old themes, but here, invested with the aura of twentieth-century disillusionment, they complicate the simple moral of Ovid's story without addressing or resolving the complications they introduced. Day Lewis has to rely on the device of the deus ex machina to banish Philemon's depression, but the need to interject it in the poem indicates Day Lewis's awareness that even a happy marriage does not exempt him from the necessity of coming to his own terms with dying: an eventuality he would confront sooner than he knew when writing this poem.

Experience up to this point had taught Day Lewis how hard it is for errant love to find a home. Consequently, where "Baucis and Philemon" is a parable about the stability—in fact, immortality—of domestic love, **"Psyche"** is a more foreboding parable, drawn from Day Lewis's experience of the forties, about the evanescence of erotic consummation, even a warning against the tragic overreaching of erotic love in seizing the sublime object of its desire. Here Psyche, the poet's female persona and emblem of the soul, experiences Eros in his very person but, by ordination of Eros himself, only under the cloak of darkness. Wanting to know Eros totally, Psyche violates the prescribed limits of human experience and lights a candle to see him as he sleeps at her side. The outcome inverts her aspirations: sight removes what she, unseeing, saw. Psyche knew Eros in sightless consummation, but light/sight, violating "this maidenhead of dark," alienates and divides her from Eros. Paradoxically, the light closes rather than opens—"a clear, impassable window / Through which her love could gaze but never go"—and she finds herself not joined but "estranged in revelation" from his "rod and fount of passion" (487-88). The drive to carnal knowledge, as Bataille was not the first to note, is psychologically associated with the soul's (or Psyche's) yearning for the absolute, a consummation that exceeds

human grasp. Too late Psyche realizes that in "breaking my faith" and demanding to know what humans cannot know, "myself I have betrayed": where "once you were mine, were me, for me alone," now "we that were one are two. Thus am I doomed."

Without any explicit Christian allusion, the language of Day Lewis's retelling of Apuleius's late-classical fable is overlaid with suggestions of Eve's fall from love into a "self-love" that is just "lust": possessive and therefore dispossessing. The homonym of "eye" and "I" links insight and individuation, consciousness and ego, identity and separation. Psyche has fallen from limited intimation of presence to isolated consciousness of absence, exiled in "the busy, barren world of mend and make." Now only "her need" for what she lost "proves and touches the Divine" (489). Is the beloved, then, only the shade of desire? The following stanza—by stretching the rhyming syllables of the first two lines into next three (a-b-a-a-b)—closes round Psyche's consciousness of that question:

> So he passed from her, and at last she learnt
> How blind she had been, how blank the world can be
> When self-love breaks into that dark room meant
> For love alone, and on the innocent
> Their nakedness dawns, outraging mystery.
>
> (489)

"Dawn" in "that dark room" spells "doom." But where Day Lewis cut off the story of Ariadne before Dionysus betrayed their conjugal union, here he chooses not to extend his account to the eventual reunion of Psyche and Eros. Instead, Psyche's didactic plea at the conclusion of the poem—"Dear souls, be told by me"—underscores the poet's hope that he has learned from sad experience the limits of love as he seeks to renegotiate his life between the reach of desire and the circumference of possibility.

As always with a poet, these matters are mediated through language. The title poem of ***Pegasus*** (dedicated to the memory of Lilian Bowes Lyon, a friend from the thirties for whose selected poems Day Lewis provided an introduction in 1948) pursues the marriage theme as a figure for aesthetic creation, and it has been acclaimed as one of his best poems. From the many episodes of Bellerophon's story Day Lewis focuses exclusively on his contest with Pegasus. The interplay through which the winged horse eludes all of Bellerophon's wiles but then submits to the controlling bridle of an humbled master is a time-honored parable for the hard-earned combination of skill and submissiveness that a poet needs to ensnare elusive inspiration in linguistic and prosodic constraints, to catch unconscious intuition in conscious form. Day Lewis's redaction of the episode at this strategic point in his development proposes a poetics of limitation, which, as we shall see, will become a major concern of his later years.

The poem recalls that Pegasus "was born from the blood of uncanny / Medusa, the nightmare-eyed" (484). In the previous chapter we examined **"The Image,"** a sonnet written some ten years earlier than **"Pegasus,"** in which the slaying of the Medusa, with its overtones of erotic conquest, becomes a trope for mastering the violence of experience in aesthetic form. There Perseus is a trope for the poet, and his reflective shield a trope for the imaged poem. Now in **"Pegasus"** Bellerophon the "invincible hero" becomes Perseus's avatar in confronting the winged offspring of the Medusa's decapitation. Again, the erotics are explicit; Pegasus is the object of Bellerophon's mastering—and as a poet his phallogocentric—desire: "his naked lover," "as if it [the horse] were some white girl / To stretch, mount, master, exhaust . . ." (483, 485). The pun on "bridal"/"bridle" sustains the link between erotic consummation and aesthetic constraint.

But the point to be stressed is that, for all the similarities between **"Pegasus"** and **"The Image,"** both the erotic and the aesthetic stance of the two poems turns out to be significantly different. For in the course of his aggressive pursuit of his "bride" with his "bridle," Bellerophon undergoes a reversal of roles when he comes to realize that "he, not the winged horse, was being broken" and trained for a different kind of encounter. In the sudden vulnerability of his new perspective he sees the horse no longer as "some white girl" to be mounted but, on the contrary, as "his lode, his lord, his appointed star" (485); outwitted, he gives in and accepts Pegasus's untrammeled victory. But of course the episode does not end with Pegasus's vanishing flight; on the contrary, the denouement brings consummation within the constraints of a reciprocity that is both escape and capture, freedom and surrender for both Bellerophon and Pegasus. In the dream that comes to Bellerophon after his impotent surrender, he receives from Athena, the most androgynous of goddesses and his patron, a golden bridle that becomes the sign and means of his empowering metamorphosis. This "mesh of immortal fire and sensual earth" portends the reconciliation of opposing elements; moreover, the bridle that the awakened Bellerophon finds at hand is a sign that such reconciliation can actually occur. He finds Pegasus waiting to "receive the visionary curb" with these reconciling words: "I am brute / And angel. He alone who taps the source / Of both, can ride me. Bellerophon, I am yours" (486). Who, then, is bride and who is bridled? The distinction is superseded: "It was all brides, all thoroughbreds, all pent passion" (486)—both earth and fire, animal and spirit.

Bellerophon wakes to find his dream come true. Then is such consummation possible this side of death, in the broken "world of mend and make"? "Psyche" says no, but "Pegasus" seems to allow it within the circumscription of the bridle. Circumscription, literally a "writing

around," reminds us, however, that this poem is about the erotics of poem-making. The poem is the manifest of the waking, or awakened, dream—or, it would be more accurate to say, it can be on those rare occasions that validate the poet's life when he manages to catch the stretch of desire in the net of language, when he inexplicably succeeds in fusing "immortal fire and sensual earth" in the poem's "mesh." In the Harvard lectures, which the next section of the chapter will examine, Day Lewis returned to the legend of Pegasus and Bellerophon as "an image for the creative process" and glossed the **"Pegasus"** poem from the practical perspective of the working poet:

> With our own human problems, how often we are told to 'sleep on it'. But we have to play an active part first. . . . Bellerophon would not have been granted the bridle if he had not spent all his energy and skill attempting to catch Pegasus. . . .
>
> (***The Lyric Impulse,*** 130-31)

In other words, as the poem itself suggests, the poet must assume his own kind of bridle, disciplining and training himself in the strategic maneuvers of poetic craft. By dictionary definition, "craft" denotes both "shrewdness, even cunning, in planning strategy" and "skill in making." The poet will never bridle Pegasus without learning to play the game and becoming an expert horseman, but, as Bellerophon had to learn, the arrogance of craft alone will never catch Pegasus. "Why is it that in one poem a good poet can capture the inspiration and go soaring up on it, whereas the next poem he writes, though as much skill and energy have gone into it, never leaves the ground?" (***The Lyric Impulse,*** 131). The winged inspiration derives not from "conscious art" but, as Pegasus instructs Bellerophon, from tapping the "source" or ground of our divided being and releasing the uncontrolled energies so that, through the instrumentality of the bridle, "conscious art" can then rein in those soaring energies and coordinate their flight pattern toward final destination (484, 486). No wonder that the opportunity to ride the winged horse presumes the requisite technical training but requires besides "a gift of the goddess," "a moment, if you like, of grace" (***The Lyric Impulse,*** 131).

Day Lewis calculatedly extends the theological term "grace" into the aesthetic dimension to signify the consonance of insight with technique, the registration of spirit in form. The six-line stanza in which the narrative of **"Pegasus"** unfolds is an excellent instance of such formal grace: a quatrain with alternating rhymes, a-b-a-b, brought to rest in the closing couplet, c-c. The last two stanzas show how the movement fulfills the form while the form manages the movement:

> Wings furled, on printless feet through the dews of morn
> Pegasus stepped, in majesty and submission,
> Towards him. Mane of tempest, delicate mien,
> It was all brides, all thoroughbreds, all pent passion.
> Breathing flowers upon him, it arched a superb
> Neck to receive the visionary curb.
>
> Pegasus said, 'The bridle that you found
> 'In sleep, you yourself made. Your hard pursuit,
> 'Your game with me upon this hallowed ground
> 'Forged it, your failures tempered it. I am brute
> 'And angel. He alone, who taps the source
> 'Of both, can ride me. Bellerophon, I am yours.'
>
> (486)

The expansive pressure of various polarities—"wings," "feet"; "majesty and submission"; "Mane of tempest, delicate mien"; "all brides, all thoroughbreds," followed by the oxymoron "all pent passion"; "found," "made"; "brute / And angel"; "taps," "ride"—is reined in by rhymed couplets whose terms reiterate the interplay of restraint and inspiration, form and substance: "superb"/ "curb"; "source"/"yours."

"Final Instructions," which concludes Part Two of ***Pegasus,*** recapitulates these points and provides its own gloss for the **"Pegasus"** poem. Its didacticism is masked as a dramatic monologue with a classical setting in which an older temple priest prepares an ephebe for the sacrificial rites. The lesson of experience is to absorb the proven techniques until they become second nature and then wait in hope but not expectation for the unpredictable descent of the god:

> So luck is all I can wish you, or need wish you.
> And every time you prepare to lay yourself
> On the altar and offer again what you have to offer,
> Remember, my son,
> Those words—patience, joy, disinterestedness.
>
> (512)

In Day Lewis's commentary the three final words sum up "the human qualities which are required if the workings of the creative spirit are to go forward unimpeded" (**"The Creative Spirit,"** 2). The joy that can overwhelm patient exercise of the craft requires the disinterested recognition that the poet-priest's successes—most especially his sublime successes—are not just personal triumphs or technical achievements. It is noteworthy that Day Lewis again connects poetry writing with religious ritual and worship; and the fact that he cited **"Final Instructions"** in so many lectures and discussions about how to write a poem indicates how basic those instructions were for him.

The poems in Part One of ***Pegasus*** provide a mythological distancing for the transitional themes that are then developed autobiographically in the poems of Parts Two and Three. Part Two contains a number of poems from the late forties and early fifties describing the scorched earth—the metaphor, as we have seen, comes

from **"George Meredith, 1861"**—that was the psychological and moral terrain of the tortuous break with Mary Day Lewis and Rosamond Lehmann. One of the best is **"Love and Pity,"** which uses the structure of the sonnet to contrast "love without pity" and "pity without love." They are characterized separately in succeeding quatrains through a pummeling succession of violent metaphors; then they are compressed and juxtaposed in the split halves of the third quatrain, and the contrast is summed up in the closing couplet:

> Love without pity is a child's hand reaching,
> A behemoth trampling, a naked bulb within
> A room of delicate tones, a clown outraging
> The heart beneath the ravished, ravisher skin.
> Pity without love is the dry soul retching,
> The strained, weak azure of a dog-day sky,
> The rescuer plunging through some thick-mined region
> Who cannot rescue and is not to die.
> Pitiless love will mean a death of love—
> An innocent act, almost a mercy-killing:
> But loveless pity makes a ghost of love,
> Petrifies with remorse each vein of feeling.
> Love can breed pity. Pity, when love's gone,
> Bleeds endlessly to no end—blood from stone.
>
> (507-8)

The poem has the shocking impact of some of Shakespeare's dark sonnets or Hopkins's terrible sonnets. As in other painfully personal poems, Day Lewis assumes a certain objectivity of presentation (though the bruising barrage of violent metaphors gives away his deep engagement), and he did not specifically associate pitiless love with his own feeling for Rosamond and loveless pity with his feeling for Mary. But Rosamond acknowledged the connection when in her autobiography she recalled the poem with bitter scorn for what seemed to her his self-exoneration and cites the phrase "*almost a mercy-killing*" in italics for emphasis (*The Swan in the Evening,* 97).

But self-exoneration is not finally what these poems seek and express. **"Almost Human"** is a punishing self-caricature, presented in the relative remove of the third person, and calling to mind E. A. Robinson's mordant sketches in ballad quatrains of "Richard Cory" and "Miniver Cheevy." The subject in **"Almost Human"** is a tweedy, much-admired writer, publicly "assured and kind" in his smooth articulateness but within "an outlaw and a cripple" with "an incurable / Sickness upon his mind" (503):

> A woman weeps, a friend's betrayed,
> Civilization plays with fire—
> His grief or guilt is easily purged
> In a rush of words to the head.
>
> (504)

Day Lewis is not the first artist to charge that the artist's compulsion to appropriate human emotions as the material for his art points to a strain of the "moral desperado" in him (Sean Day Lewis, 231-33):

> The newly dead, and their waxwork faces
> With the look of things that could never have lived,
> He'll use to prime his cold, strange heart
> And prompt the immortal phrases.
>
> (504)

This man might be the not-quite-human figure in Lehmann's memoir. But Day Lewis is no moral desperado, and the last two quatrains ask the reader, before condemning "this eminent freak / As an outrage upon mankind," to look deeper and see him as all too human: "something there is in him" that seeks to break out of isolation and share in human love, but that thwarted aspect of himself (in an image from "The Little Mermaid," Hans Christian Andersen's fable of longing and betrayal) "walks on knives, on knives" (504).

"Almost Human" is an act of self-accusation (and, Day Lewis perhaps hoped, of exorcism preparatory to a different love-commitment), but not of exoneration from responsibility. The literary exploiter in **"Almost Human"** is only a tourist through life (see **"The Tourists,"** 508-9), not (as Day Lewis often figured his purpose) a traveler who becomes the "fabric of the road" he journeys (325). At this midlife juncture Day Lewis cannot but ask himself about his present direction. **"The Wrong Road"** even questions the "easier walking" that his second marriage seemed to have brought him. Though he felt "at home" at last, did its "lack / Of grit and gradient" make it for that very reason the wrong road for him? It was, in any case, the road before him; there did not seem the choice that Frost faced in "The Road Not Taken." The challenge, then, was to be not a mere sightseeing tourist but as wholly human a journeyman as possible:

> For this lost traveller, all depends
> On how real the road is to him—not as a mode
> Of advancement or exercise—rather, as grain
> To timber, intrinsic-real.
>
> He can but pursue
> His course and believe that, granting the road
> Was right at the start, it will see him through
> Their errors and turn into the right road again.
>
> (502)

"Their errors": the word includes the road's meanderings and his own transgressions.

The momentary hesitation about the future was resolved by poem's end. In fact, the road ahead would provide its own grit and gradient, but in the fifties he let himself enjoy the slower pace of the level stretch, and his meditations savored the autumnal fruits of domesticity, bittersweet because late coming and seasoned by the

awareness of spring-in-fall. In Part Three of ***Pegasus,*** a translucent serenity, not free of conflict but instead distilled from it like an essence, begins to suffuse many of the poems of his last two decades: something of Edgar's essential wisdom in *Lear* that "Ripeness is all" (V, ii, 11). **"On a Dorset Upland"** (from Part Three of ***Pegasus***) is a superb instance of this plangent lyricism. It memorializes the many radiant sojourns he and Jill enjoyed in the Dorset countryside around Dorchester during the early years of their marriage:

> The floor of the high wood all smoking with bluebells,
> Sap a-flare, wildfire weed, a here-and-gone wing,
> Frecklings of sunlight and flickerings of shadowleaf—
> How quickly, how gustily kindles the spring,
> Consumes our spring!
>
> Tall is the forenoon of larks forever tingling:
> A vapour trail, threading the blue, frays out
> Slowly to a tasselled fringe; and from horizon
> To horizon amble white eternities of cloud,
> Sleepwalking cloud.
>
> Here in this niche on the face of the May morning,
> Fast between vale and sky, growth and decay,
> Dream with the clouds, my love, throb to the awakened
> Earth who has quickened a paradise from clay,
> Sweet air and clay.
>
> Now is the chink between two deaths, two eternities.
> Seed here, root here, perennially cling!
> Love me today and I shall live today always!
> Blossom, my goldenmost, at-long-last spring,
> My long, last spring!
>
> (521-22)

Day Lewis's knowledge of music and song and his own experience of singing songs (Tom Moore was a favorite) inform a poem like **"On a Dorset Upland"** and make it not so much a text awaiting musical setting (though some of Day Lewis's poems have been set) as an incorporation of lyricism into what Day Lewis called the "singing line" of spoken verse (***The Lyric Impulse,*** 132). The rhyming of the second, fourth, and fifth lines of the five-line stanza quickens each unit and intensifies its euphony, only to cut it short with the contraction of the five-stress lines to two concluding stresses. The poem celebrates his marriage by transforming the Dorset countryside, already associated with Hardy and now intimately familiar through the couple's visits there, into the landscape of their love. The opening phrases of the stanzas particularize the time and place: "The floor of the high wood," the "tall" sky overhead, "Here" and "Now." The intensity of their love, reflected by the countryside, is muted by consciousness of its brevity. The incandescence of "Sap a-flare, wildfire weed" is matched, in the second half of line two, by "a here-and-gone wing"; "kindles the spring" collapses immediately into "Consumes our spring"; "larks forever tingling" disintegrate into "a vapour trail," with the alliteration of "forenoon," "forever," "frays," "fringe," and "from" tracing out the unravelling. "Eternities of cloud" becomes, with the turn of a line, "Sleepwalking cloud." But, in the last two stanzas, mutability serves to concentrate and focus the present: the upland is made "fast"—that is, both fixed and short-lived—"between vale and sky" in the cycle of "growth and decay," and the moment is framed and delimited between the "two deaths, two eternities" of before and after. The poem issues imperatives ("Dream," "throb," "seed," "root," "cling," "blossom") that strive to prolong the in-between into the perennial, to elide "love" into "live," "today" into "always" ("Love me today and I shall live today always"), to reclaim "paradise" from "clay." But the affirmative exclamations are chastened by the slight but decisive modulations of the closing rhymes of each stanza; in particular the very last rhyme holds in tense consummation the postponed momentousness of my "at-long-last spring" and the prolonged finality of "my long, last spring." The declension from "at-long-last" to "long, last" is the decisive difference between a connective hyphen and the disjunctive comma that changes "at-long-last" into "long, last."

What makes the lyric achievement of a poem like this all the more remarkable is that its formal intricacy is enhanced rather than diminished by the immediacy of the spoken voice, which can even turn the flatness of "Love me today and I shall live today always" into song. As we have seen, Day Lewis, like others in the Auden circle, was seeking from the late twenties on to combine prosodic ingenuity with a flexible meter and run-on lines that registered the timbre and rhythms of speech in a modern register. It was his strategy for defining a modern poetry between the nineteenth-century fustiness of the Georgian adherence to convention and the Modernist subversion of the distinction between verse and prose. Day Lewis's kind of colloquiality and even prosiness would be metered and rhymed in complicated stanzas with singing lines. The prosy inflections would make meter a supple medium for the modern sensibility, and meter would lift contemporary speech into lyric intensity and concentration. Poems like **"On a Dorset Upland"** and others we have examined and will be examining demonstrate the assurance that made Day Lewis a virtuoso in fulfilling his own model of the modern. For it is important to recognize that in his criticism and poetry Day Lewis was deliberately proposing and exemplifying a modern alternative to poetic Modernism for cogent intellectual, aesthetic, and social reasons.

"The Wrong Road" was only one of many Day Lewis poems, earlier and yet to come, that treat the dialectics of "home" and "road"; houses were signposts of the journey: Box Cottage, Brimclose, Little Wittenham. But 6 Crooms Hill, the gracious Georgian residence of the

Day Lewis family from New Years Day, 1958, till his death, became home in a way he had not previously known. From that base the poetry of the fifties and sixties turned from the erotic quest of the forties to draw in and constellate the circle of family and friends around the lodestar of home. Part Two of ***Pegasus*** had settled the old scores sufficiently for Part Three to open the new phase, beginning with **"The House Where I Was Born"** and ending with **"Last Words."** In between, poems deal with relationships between parents, especially fathers, and children, especially sons, so that the poet as both son and father becomes the pivot of generations, turning and looking both ways.

In the first poem of Part Three, the poet imagines himself into a photograph of **"The House Where I Was Born,"** summoning back the mother he could not know and the father he did not know in life to "ask the questions I never could ask them / Until it was too late" (514). In the reversed perspective of **"Father to Sons"** the poet broods over the lost childhood of Sean and Nicholas at Box Cottage and wonders what they in their middle age will "think of me, say of me, . . . When I am dead?" (515). He seems by hindsight the "serpent" whose "unreason / Or too much reason" ruined what should have been his boys' "garden idyll" and so "made your Eden / A state you could not be sorry to slough." The word "Forgive" is again suspended in the need to absolve and be absolved: "I still had much that even / A god only gets at through mortal stuff / To learn about love" (515). In **"Son and Father,"** the poet, now son once more, links his own fall from grace retrospectively with his self-protective resistance to the demanding possessiveness of Frank Day-Lewis's love. Did the son's rebellion against the ordained man of God so closely identify God and man as to forfeit the son's faith as well and unwittingly cripple him emotionally and spiritually for life?

> Did I thus, denying him, grow
> Quite dead to the Father's grace, the Son's redemption?
>
> Ungenerous to him no more, but unregenerate,
> Still on a frozen earth I stumble after
> Each glimmer of God, although it lights up my lack,
> And lift my maimed creations to beg rebirth.
>
> (516)

"The Great Magicians" describes this "lack" as "the hollow in the breast / Where a God should be" and brands this "fault" beyond absolution or remedy (524). But **"Christmas Eve"** (issued separately by Faber and Faber as an Ariel poem in 1954) pursues the almost Arnoldian or Dickensian sentiment that even for questing unbelievers the commemoration of "incarnate Love" at Christmastide "can keep / Expectation alive." If, as he feared, his fall from grace is a consequence of the son's rejection of the father, then perhaps "Love's mystery" may be "revealed" in the counterturn when the secular son-turned-father "becomes the child" (517-18).

Become a child again himself? Become the Christchild? Would either move be possible for him? If not, perhaps the offspring of his married love augured rebirth. The desire to recover something of the lost self in the child, therefore, looked forward as well as backward, trying to complete the circle of self. By the time the American edition of ***Pegasus*** appeared a year after the British, Day Lewis had interpolated into Part Three two poems written for and dedicated to the daughter and son of his "long, last love." But did the child offer the prospect of forging a new set of possibilities or simply of re-enacting the old heartbreaks? Within the circle of time was "expectation" of a change of terms and outcome merely a sentimental delusion?

"Getting Warm—Getting Cold" describes the baby Tamasin's excited search for a hidden present, while her parents try to guide her to it with hints of proximity or distance. The poem turns this familial game into a poignant recognition of the child's still warm belief in life's mystery before the chill of mortal loss:

> May she keep this sense of the hidden thing,
> The somewhere joy that enthralled her,
> When she's uncountable presents older—
> Small room left for marvels, and none to say
> 'You are warmer, now you are colder.'
>
> (545)

As in John Crowe Ransom's poems about the child's doomed innocence ("Janet Waking," for example, or "Dead Boy"), the wit of the adult observer is meant to cut the sweetness of the sentiment. In this last stanza the puns on "uncountable presents older" (as the "gifts" but also the "passing moments" of a lifetime) and on "enthralled" (as "held in awed wonder" but also "held in bondage") implicitly acknowledge the speaker's ironic awareness of the futility of the prayer he finds himself pronouncing with all his heart.

Within the cluster of autobiographical poems in Part Three of the American ***Pegasus,*** **"Getting Warm—Getting Cold"** is placed just before **"Christmas Eve";** and its companion piece, **"The Newborn,"** comes just after. In explaining to the infant Daniel why "your birthday" is also, among the family feasts, "our thanksgiving" (542), **"The Newborn"** again posits the potential for transformation nascent in any manifestation of life:

> This morsel of man I've held—
> What potency it has,
> Though strengthless still and naked as
> A nut unshelled!
> Every newborn seems a reviving seed
> Or metaphor of the divine,
> Charged with the huge, weak power of grass

To split rock. How we need
Any least sign
That our stone age can break, our winter pass!

(541)

The breakup of our stony, wintry condition requires the breakthrough of parturition. The grass seed is an organic and Romantic symbol (Whitman comes most quickly to mind, but also Williams's "A Sort of Song" in which the saxifrage's name asserts its power to split rocks) for the correspondence between nature and human nature as a "metaphor of the divine." But the language of the passage deflates such assurance repeatedly in the lapse from "potency" to "strengthless," from "huge" to "weak," from "power" to "need." Is the passage offering a "sign" of "power" . . . or only of "need"? A "metaphor of the divine" or, as in a post-Romantic like Stevens, just a metaphor for the divine? Does it signify presence or absence? The last stanza of **"The Newborn,"** following the one above, reiterates that the boy's birth arouses hope for renewal in "time-worn folk," but even here the affirmation is qualified by a clause that melds hope with wish fulfillment: "as though mankind's begun / Again in you." Frost spoke for Stevens and Day Lewis and many of the moderns when he said "All virtue in 'as if'" (*Selected Prose,* 67). Honesty about the "as if" unsettles the conclusion of a poem like this one (and poems by Frost), but saves it from a falsifying sentimentality.

The "need" for a breakthrough is voiced again and again, as in this stanza from **"The Years O":**

Far back, through wastes of ennui
The child you were plods on,
Hero and simpleton
Of his own timeless story,
Yet sure that somewhere beyond
Mirage and shifting sand
A real self must be.

(518)

Once again, however, the language wobbles. The passage plays its declarative statement against the underlying disparities between "mirage and shifting sand" and "real self," between "hero" and "simpleton," "wastes of ennui" and "timeless story," "sure" and "somewhere," "plods on" and "beyond." These lacunae shift the poem from statement to question. Is the father's hoped-for "second childhood" a sign not of rebirth but of senility? Does the circle of life close, as the recently dead Dylan Thomas found, on the parched frustration of unslaked desire?

Is it a second childhood,
No wiser than the first,
That we so rage and thirst
For some unchangeable good?
Should not a wise man laugh
At desires that are only proof
Of slackening flesh and blood?

(519)

But the last stanza borrows an image from Valéry to strike a note that will become more and more urgently felt in Day Lewis's later poetry; for it makes all the difference if, as this stanza claims, the approaching death of desire can invest old age with an intensified potency rather than impotence:

Faster though time will race
As the blood runs more slow,
Another force we know:
Fiercer through narrowing days
Leaps the impetuous jet,
And tossing a dancer's head
Taller it grows in grace.

(519)

Time's narrowing swirl can serve to put tumescent pressure on the passing moments, and the combined phallic and vaginal aspects of the image of the jet provide a more orgasmic version of what Stevens meant in "Sunday Morning" when he said that "Death is the mother of beauty" who impels her sons "to pile new plums and pears / On disregarded plates" for her daughters to "taste / And stray impassioned in the littering leaves" (***Collected Poems,*** 68-69).

Paradoxically, however, the discipline of living under the pressure of time also requires acceptance of going with the flow, willingness to relinquish even moments of consummation. **"Time to Go"** commemorates an almost paradisal Italian visit that the Day Lewises made in 1951, the first after their marriage, and particularly their stay with Stephen and Natasha Spender in Torre del Benaco. The necessary moment of departure is cast, with Miltonic overtones, as an expulsion from a lapsed Eden:

. . . time to go. They turned and hurried away
With never a look behind,
As if they were sure perfection could only stay
Perfect now in the mind. . . .

(521)

The couple, children of Adam and Eve, accept expulsion as a fate long since accomplished; they are not residents of Eden but travelers in exiled journey through a fallen world in which even "felicity" demands closure and terminus:

release from its own charmed sphere,
To be carried into the world of flaws and heartaches,
Reborn, though mortally, there.

(521)

The worldly wisdom of their free acceptance of exile, "cherishing their brief vision," shows its consolatory

beneficence when St. Michael, the archangelic emissary charged with turning them out, sees that he can sheath his "flaming sword, his mission / A pure formality" (521).

"As if they were sure perfection could only stay / Perfect now in the mind"; "all virtue," as Frost said, "in 'as if.'" But of course the poet did not carry the "brief vision" into the "world of flaws and heartaches" perfected "in the mind" only. The writing of these words into a poem constitutes the "as if" that aspires to a "pure formality" of aesthetic invention to hold the moment within and against the erosions of time and memory. In fact, as we shall elaborate in the next section of the chapter, Valéry meant the fountain's jet as an image of the concentrated intensity that formal conventions can impose on the inchoate flow of experience and flow of words. Valéry's image sums up much about modern and Modernist aesthetics. Pound also invoked the fountain (this time from Verlaine's "Clair de Lune") at the end of Canto 74, as he seeks to give direction and focus to the articulation of his own scattered memories. He conceives all twenty-five pages of this first, longest, and baggiest of *The Pisan Cantos* as a whole held "serenely in the crystal jet / as the bright ball that the fountain tosses / (Verlaine) as diamond clearness"; and he too locates the source of the canto's force and direction in the imagination's control of its medium: "This liquid is certainly a / property of the mind" (*The Cantos,* 449).

When **"The Years O"** concludes that the fountain, "tossing a dancer's head" and springing "taller," "grows in grace," this last word, a recurrent one in Day Lewis's verse and prose reenforced here by the alliteration, serves again to deflect the religious fulfillment of desire into poetic fulfillment. The title of **"Dedham Vale, Easter 1954,"** dedicated to Elizabeth Jane Howard, connects aesthetic "creation"—this time the Romantic paintings of Dedham Vale by John Constable—with the annual canonical season of rebirth. Constable perfects his passion for the pastoral countryside and luminous skies around his native Flatford and the river Stour by figuring them in paint as his own "landscape of the heart":

> His sunburst inspiration
> Made earthly forms so true
> To life, so new to vision,
> That now the actual view
> Seems a mere phantom, through
> Whose blur we glimpse creation.
>
> (523)

So, for Day Lewis in ***Pegasus,*** poems celebrating a marriage trip and the birth of a child finally say that rebirth in time is an aesthetic "creation": our closest approximation on earth to paradise regained. The poem is jet and fountain, instrument and end, "where all is / Movement and all at peace" (523). In the poetic round at least, the desire going forth meets the desire returning home.

All movement and all at peace: Day Lewis pointedly gathered together at the end of Part Two of ***Pegasus*** a number of poems about artistic creation, climaxing in **"Sheepdog Trials in Hyde Park"** (included in the American edition and discussed in the next section) and **"Final Instructions"** (discussed earlier in this section). In order to bridge the transition from the "scorched earth" poems of Part Two to the autobiographical meditations of Part Three, this succession of poems about poetry must itself move from negation to affirmation. **"Elegiac Sonnet"** mourns his musician friend Noel Mewton-Wood, whose suicide in 1954 posts a warning about the vulnerability of the artist and the fragility of his purpose. For in his case "the stern ordeal of art" was not strong enough to maintain "the transport of his April force" against "the simple exercise of human loss," and so, all prematurely, "a fountain plays no more: those pure cascades / And diamond plumes now sleep within their source" (510). Similarly—and again with the trope of the dancing fountain—**"In Memory of Dylan Thomas"** begins with the lament "*Too soon, it is all too soon*" for another artist, who "danced on a plume of words, / Sang with a fountain's panache" but, again prematurely and almost willfully, was dead before forty in 1953.

But Day Lewis had always felt that Thomas's wrongheaded and profligate rage against mortality revealed the death wish it sought to deny, and now his elegy for Thomas works to retrieve from the wreckage a tempered assertion of the poet's high purpose:

> A poet can seem to show
> Animal, child and leaf
> In the light of eternity, though
> It is but the afterglow
> From his consuming love,
> The spill of a fabulous dawn
> Where animal, leaf and child,
> Timelessly conceived,
> With time are reconciled.
>
> (509)

The giveaway word "seem" in the first line sets into motion the deconstruction of "the light of eternity" into the "afterglow" of the poet's "consuming" desire. The single long sentence winds down the enjambment of verses past the irregular rhymes through the subversive "though" clause in the middle. But the end of the sentence recoups something of the loss and winds itself up again to the final period: "animal, leaf and child, / Timelessly conceived, / With time are reconciled." That is to say, the poet can show something; even if it is just the radiant reflection and conception of his own desire and

need, that "afterglow" becomes "a fabulous dawn"—"fabulous" in the sense of "fabled" and "marvelous" but also in the sense of "fabling" or (Stevens's word) "fictive." The poetic offspring of the imagination's desire reconciles existence to its mortality. When Eliot wrote in "Burnt Norton," "Only through time time is conquered," he was speaking from a Christian perspective that sees time's shadow "in the light of eternity" and thus conceives time as a process necessary for but preparatory to transcendence. For Day Lewis "animal, leaf and child" are "timelessly conceived" not "in the light of eternity" but in the poetic measure that composes and thereby reconciles contingencies into its own artificial (or art-making) time, whose recorded movement is impervious to clock time. That is to say, for Day Lewis only through metrical time is chronological time conquered. His poem for the composer **"Edward Elgar"** reiterates this axiom unequivocally: the artwork, "beat to its own time, timelessly make[s] heard / A long-breathed statement or a hesitant phrase" (573).

Because ***Pegasus*** is a transitional book, composed from poems written over almost a decade and executing a painfully wrung reorientation, it is in its organization and development the most complex of all Day Lewis's volumes of poems. Most of the issues raised in the process converge in **"Last Words."** This concluding poem of the volume attempts to imagine a lifetime and a life's versing concentered in the consuming and consummating moment of thanatos:

> Suppose, they asked,
> You are on your death-bed (this is just the game
> For a man of words),
> With what definitive sentence will you sum
> And end your being? . . . Last words: but which of me
> Shall utter them?
>
> —The child, who in London's infinite, intimate darkness
> Out of time's reach,
> Heard nightly an engine whistle, remote and pure
> As a call from the edge
> Of nothing, and soon in the music of departure
> Had perfect pitch?
>
> —The romantic youth
> For whom horizons were the daily round,
> Near things unbiddable and inane as dreams,
> Till he had learned
> Through his hoodwinked orbit of clay what Eldorados
> Lie close to hand?
>
> —Or the ageing man, seeing his lifelong travel
> And toil scaled down
> To a flimsy web
> Stranded on two dark boughs, dissolving soon,
> And only the vanishing dew makes visible now
> Its haunted span?
>
> Let this man say,
> Blest be the dew that graced my homespun web.
> Let this youth say,
> Prairies bow to the treadmill: do not weep.
> Let this child say,
> I hear the night bird. I can go to sleep.
>
> (529-30)

The poem sets a breezy tone at the opening: a verbal "game" to challenge this "man of words" to imagine his deathbed pronouncements. And the verbal play keeps the pace of the "game" lively: "definitive sentence" as "final declaration" and "writ of execution"; "you sum ["sum" is Latin for "I am"] . . . your being"; "infinite, intimate"; "horizons"/"the daily round"; "web / Stranded"; "boughs"/"bow"; "vanishing"/"visible"; "haunted span"/"homespun." And the prosodic form seems whimsical enough. Five six-line stanzas, with the second, fourth, and sixth lines of each in loose and approximate rhymes; each stanza has three five-stressed lines and three two-stressed lines, but the mixture of five and two varies from stanza to stanza as the perspective shifts. For the middle stanzas go back in time to plot out in three stages the poet's broken progress to his deathbed: the lonely boy in the vast city, recalled from earlier poems like **"Cornet Solo"** and **"The Chrysanthemum Show";** the "romantic youth" vainly searching the horizon for the object of his desire first through radical politics in the thirties and then through erotic adventure in the forties; the aging and unappeased ex-traveler awaiting the end.

By the end of the fourth stanza it is clear that the playfulness of the "game" masks its mortal stakes, moving on a direct linear track from "the edge / Of nothing" to the brink of oblivion. But the last stanza turns the trajectory into a circle. Formally the fifth stanza returns to the pattern of the first: a regular alternation of three two-stressed and three five-stressed lines. In addition, the first, third, and fifth lines, unrhymed in the other stanzas, here all repeat the word "say," bringing the poet's life around to closure in deathbed declarations not of rage or resignation but of benediction and acceptance. The poet's consciousness has drawn the circle of containment, and within its conception and execution he is reconciled. The "man of words" dies and survives in the formal verbal construction of his identity. He remembers, re-calls, re-collects himself in the "graced," metered, rhymed symmetry of three "definitive sentence[s]."

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Jill Balcon (essay date 2004)

SOURCE: Balcon, Jill. Introduction to *Selected Poems,* by Cecil Day Lewis, edited by Jill Balcon, pp. 12-22. London: Enitharmon Press, 2004.

[*In the following essay, originally published as her introduction to the 2004 edition of Day Lewis's* Selected Poems, *Balcon, the author's second wife, surveys his poetic development, asserting that "at his best, he was a formidable craftsman" and "a storyteller in verse."*]

In C. Day Lewis's centenary year it is heartening to be able to introduce a substantial ***Selected Poems.*** This volume is largely based on the selection he made for Penguin in 1951, which he extended in 1957 and 1969. To these poems I have added particular favourites from the collections published in his lifetime, together with some of the ***Posthumous Poems*** and a few *vers d'occasion*: as Poet Laureate he wrote a number, always on subjects that were important to him and of significance in the world—famine, flood, libraries, to name a few.

I shall now call him Cecil, though at his insistence his Christian name, which he disliked, was never printed after 1927, except in ignorance.

In his preface to the ***Collected Poems 1954*** he wrote, after rereading them:

> I have felt both surprise and regret: regret, that so much energy should so often have run to waste; surprise to hear a buried self speaking, now and then, with such urgency. Some poets can rewrite and improve their early work, years later. I wish I could do so; but the selves who wrote those poems are strangers to me, and I cannot resume their identities or go back into the world where they lived. There are certain themes, no doubt, linking these dead selves together. Perhaps these constant themes compose the personal tradition of a poet—his one continuity, defining and preserving, through every change of language, every change of heart, what is essential to him . . .

It might be helpful to remind today's readers of some of the facts comprehensively documented elsewhere. The 'Macspaunday' poets who flowered in the 'thirties (C. Day Lewis, W. H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender) were friends, but never a group. They had shared the same privileged background, public school and Oxford—in Cecil's case through scholarships and exhibitions, as his father was a parson of no means. However, adolescent life in his father's Nottinghamshire mining parish also included tennis parties in 'the Dukeries' and he became acutely aware of the contrast between the lowest and highest strata of society. In his poem, **'Sketches for a Self-Portrait'** (***Poems 1943-1947***) he

looked for a lost ball
In the laurels, they smirched with pit-grime . . .

He had seen his father sitting by the bedsides of miners coughing themselves to death. His outrage at social injustice stemmed from that time. Then, with the onset of fascism and the Spanish Civil War, came the urgent wish to prevent war. For the time being he turned to communism along with many other artists and intellectuals of this period.

The late Clifford Dyment, in his booklet *C. Day Lewis* (1955), thought that the poetic powers of the author of the so-called 'Political' poems could carry the reader over the rough places and sometimes didactic tone 'by the beauty and momentum of the verse itself'. Cecil was a man with music in his bones (he had a ravishing light tenor singing voice, and was one of the finest speakers of verse of his generation—accomplishments not universal among poets). Stanzas from these love poems of the 'Political' period show his lyricism.

. . . Desire is a witch
And runs against the clock.
It can unstitch
The decent hem
Where space tacks on to time:
It can unlock
Pandora's privacies . . .

Transitional Poem

. . . With me, my lover makes
The clock assert its chime:
But when she goes, she takes
The mainspring out of time . . .

Transitional Poem

. . . Beauty's end is in sight,
Terminus where all feather joys alight.
Wings that flew lightly
Fold and are iron. We see
The thin end of mortality . . .

From Feathers to Iron

. . . Do not expect again a phoenix hour,
The triple-towered sky, the dove complaining,
Sudden the rain of gold and heart's first ease
Tranced under trees by the eldritch light of sundown . . .

From Feathers to Iron

Those early love lyrics nearly cost him his job at Cheltenham Junior School. In his autobiography ***The Buried Day*** he tells how the headmaster had seen ***Transitional Poem*** in the local bookshop and summoned Cecil to his study. H.M. was clearly deeply embarrassed, and asked C. if he thought he was fit to teach little boys, because the poems were . . . (he couldn't bring himself to say it) 'extremely . . . excessively . . . er . . . SEXUAL'. 'But they're love poems,' blurted out Cecil, 'addressed to my wife.'

As a schoolmaster, and later as a professor, Cecil insisted that one must respond to a poem directly, spontaneously, positively—'to be able to enjoy before we can learn to discriminate'. He also said: 'Modern poetry is every poem, whether written last year or five centuries ago, that has meaning for us still.' The reader will find some themes prevailing throughout his work: hero-worship, fear, compassion, transience, very often the conflict of a divided heart and mind, and always the relentless compulsion to know himself.

Cecil was a modest man; I wish to make no extravagant claims on his behalf. He himself thought that only his sonnet sequence **'O Dreams, O Destinations'** (***Word Over All***) might, possibly, endure. At the end of his life, when asked to contribute to James Gibson's anthology *Let the Poet Choose,* he submitted the last of those nine sonnets, and **'On Not Saying Everything'** (***The Room*** [***The Room and Other Poems***]) which he wrote during a fruitful time at Harvard in 1964-5, when he held the Charles Eliot Norton Chair. This is what he said: 'May I suggest . . . the sonnet because, though I wrote it 30 years ago, it still stands up and says something I feel to be truthful about the human condition: **"On not saying everything"** because I believe so strongly in the doctrine of limitations it speaks for—that everything, a tree, a poem, a human relationship, lives and thrives by the limits imposed on it.'

Of course poets are not always their own best judges. However, in their solitude, they cannot realise how much and where they touch other people's lives. I am touched myself when friends, and often strangers, quote passages of Cecil's which move them and, moreover, sustain them. **'Walking Away'** (***The Gate*** [***The Gate and Other Poems***]) usually brings many reactions whenever it is broadcast or read in public.

. . . I have had worse partings, but none that so
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly
Saying what God alone could perfectly show—
How selfhood begins with a walking away,
And love is proved in the letting go.

Anyone who has lost a child, or simply left one at the new school gate, can identify with the parting. **'My Mother's Sister'** (***The Room***) is a poignant poem about the beloved aunt who brought him up from the age of four when his mother died. In both these poems he avoids sentimentality—a real achievement. It is inter-

esting that religious images appear often in Cecil's poems, even though he became a rather 'churchy' agnostic after the years of living in a parsonage. The title poem in ***The Gate*** was dedicated to Trekkie Parsons. One week-end in her house, he couldn't take his eyes off a picture she had painted. I could see it was saying something to him, and thanks to her generosity I bought it for him in instalments.

> . . . We expect nothing (the flowers might add), we only
> Await: this pure awaiting—
> It is the kind of worship we are taught.

It was greatly encouraging to Cecil that Henry Moore, after reading a typescript of **'The Expulsion'** (***Posthumous Poems***), told him he had learned something new about the fresco by Masaccio which had inspired the poem. Only recently—I wish I could tell the author—that superb pianist and scholar Graham Johnson said to me that **'Cornet Solo'** (***Word Over All***) was 'the most evocative poem I know about the power of music in childhood's memory.'

> . . . Strange how those yearning airs could sweeten
> And still enlighten
> The hours when solitude gave me her breast.
> Strange they could tell a mere child how hearts may beat in
> The self-same tune for the once-possessed
> And the unpossessed . . .

Adverse academic criticism could not demolish these statements of faith by other artists.

Some of those who declared that CDL 'had no voice of his own' had not, perhaps, listened or looked carefully enough. This is what he said himself about influences: 'I myself have been technically influenced, and enabled to clarify my thoughts, by such diverse poets as Yeats, Wordsworth, Robert Frost, Virgil, Valéry, W. H. Auden, and Hardy. They suggested to me ways of saying what I had to say. Any given poem thus influenced is not necessarily second-hand: I think it possible that a reader with a sensitive ear, a dispassionate point of view, and a thorough knowledge of the poetry of Hardy, say, would find as much difference as similarity between a poem of mine, influenced by him, and one of Hardy's own.'

In one case, until I pointed this out, a scholar actually failed to observe the initials under the titles of each pastiche in the ***Florence: Works of Art*** section of ***An Italian Visit.*** Earlier I wrote of hero-worship as a recurrent theme. I think it is one of the constituents of these pastiches. There are certainly many examples of this in music. Cecil matched the subjects of some of the Florentine pictures and sculpture he most loved, with poems in the style of poets he deeply admired: Yeats, Hardy, Robert Frost, W. H. Auden and Dylan Thomas. He wrote 'in the style of' and was admonished for being merely imitative . . .

At his best, he was a formidable craftsman. He was a storyteller in verse. This mastery of the narrative—a rare gift today—was shown first in ***A Time to Dance*** [***A Time to Dance and Other Poems***]. Part of it is a gripping tale of a flight to Australia by two men in a decrepit aircraft after the First World War. Cecil had a tremendous reverence for brave men of action, and he had a passion for flying. The poem is an extraordinary feat of technique: long, rhythmic, 'airborne' lines, containing rhymes, half rhymes and internal rhymes (very much part of his 'voice'). He was to demonstrate this narrative skill again in **'The Nabara'** (***Overtures to Death*** [***Overtures to Death and Other Poems***]).

> *'They preferred, because of the rudeness of their heart, to die rather than to surrender.'*
>
> Phase One
>
> Freedom is more than a word, more than the base coinage
> Of statesmen, the tyrant's dishonoured cheque, or the dreamer's mad
> Inflated currency. She is mortal, we know, and made
> In the image of simple men who have no taste for carnage
> But sooner kill and are killed than see that image betrayed.
> Mortal she is, yet rising always refreshed from her ashes:
> She is bound to earth, yet she flies as high as a passage bird
> To home wherever man's heart with seasonal warmth is stirred:
> Innocent is her touch as the dawn's, but still it unleashes
> The ravisher shades of envy. Freedom is more than a word . . .

He was over forty when, after the war, he was able to afford his first holiday abroad and immediately he fell in love with Italy, like so many poets before him. Later, we did the journeys all over again together. **'Flight to Italy'** was exactly as he told it in ***An Italian Visit.*** (It was before the days of jet aircraft, and I did not share his wild elation at take-off or when 'the atrocious Alps' were, literally, upon us, not below, and we eventually landed in Milan in a turmoil of forked lightning.) In the middle of the narrative is a contemplative passage I often quote to people who are recovering from illness and finding—as we all do—that convalescence can be the hardest part:

. . . After a hard winter, on the first warm day
The invalid venturing out into the rock-garden,
Pale as a shaft of December sunshine, pauses,
All at sea among the aubretia, the alyssum
And arabis - halts and moves on how warily,
As if to take soundings where the blossom foams and tumbles:
But what he does sound is the depth of his own weakness

At last, as never when pain-storms lashed him.
So we, convalescent from routine's long fever,
Plummeting our gaze down to river and plain,
Question if indeed that dazzling world beneath us
Be truth or delirium; and finding still so tentative
The answer, can gauge how nearly we were ghosts,
How far we must travel yet to flesh and blood . . .

In ***Pegasus*** [***Pegasus and Other Poems***], the narrative poems are new workings of Greek legends. The title poem is a powerful allegory about the creative process; a large number of his poems were about writing. The allegories **'A Failure'** and **'The Unwanted'** (***Poems 1943-1947***), **'Final Instructions'** (***Pegasus***) and **'Circus Lion'** (***The Gate***) say a great deal about the discipline, devotion and pain of being a poet. In a lighter mood is a charming poem with an intricate, elegant stanza form dedicated to Robert Frost, called **'Sheepdog Trials in Hyde Park'** (***The Gate***). Cecil challenged Frost to write one too, when, in 1957, they spent an afternoon together at this unlikely entertainment for a New England farmer.

. . . What's needfully done in the solitude of sheep-runs—
Those tough, real tasks—becomes this stylized game,
A demonstration of intuitive wit
Kept natural by the saving grace of error.
To lift, to fetch, to drive, to shed, to pen
Are acts I recognize, with all they mean
Of shepherding the unruly, for a kind of
Controlled woolgathering is my work too.

At this time he wrote his first Dramatic Monologue for me: **'Ariadne on Naxos'.** He never succeeded in writing a play, but had a great gift for dialogue in poetry (and in the detective novels written by his alter ego Nicholas Blake). Later, in ***The Gate,*** he wrote two more Dramatic Monologues: **'The Disabused'** (which he performed brilliantly and chillingly) and **'Not Proven',** which he dedicated to our friend, George Rylands, the distinguished scholar, with whom we gave many recitals, and who was a co-founder of the Apollo Society.

In 1940 Cecil published his translation of Virgil's ***Georgics.*** He had been a classical scholar at Wadham College, Oxford, and all his translations were exact, as well as being poems in their own right. He set out to steer the course between 'the twin vulgarities of flashy colloquialism and perfunctory grandiloquence'. He was a countryman for preference and was always minutely observant and accurate in his study of nature and the land. This is evident in all the poems. He felt intensely patriotic about his roots in the countryside on the Dorset/Devon border, and the threat of invasion intensified these feelings. Through them he was linked to Virgil, who had written of the land and husbandry with such tenderness all those centuries before.

In ***Poems 1943-1947*** there is his fine translation of Paul Valéry's *Le Cimetière marin* ('The Graveyard by the Sea'). It is faithful, and it is a poem of his own. I felt impelled to go there after his death, when the Spenders were giving me refuge in Provence. Natasha and I started out very early before the blistering heat of a July day. She drove me to Sète; we arrived at noon. It was extraordinary—we had walked into the poem (Cecil himself had never seen the graveyard).

This quiet roof, where dove-sails saunter by,
Between the pines, the tombs, throbs visibly.
Impartial noon patterns the sea in flame—
That sea for ever starting and re-starting.
When thought has had its hour, oh how rewarding
Are the long vistas of celestial calm!
What grace of light, what pure toil goes to form
The manifold diamond of the elusive foam!
What peace I feel begotten at that source!
When sunlight rests upon a profound sea,
Time's air is sparkling, dream is certainty—
Pure artifice both of an eternal Cause . . .

The last volume to be published in his lifetime was ***The Whispering Roots,*** in 1970, when his health had been failing for many years. More than half the poems spring from his Anglo-Irish provenance: the childhood memories; his Goldsmith ancestry; our 1966 visit to Dublin to commemorate the Easter Rising of 1916 (there were many other Dublin visits); the glorious summers we spent yearly with our children in Connemara and County Mayo—'a source held near and dear'. In this book there are thirty-seven different stanza forms in thirty-four poems, and only one is repeated. Of a particular anonymous review of the poems Professor Samuel Hynes said, five years after C's death: 'It was not so much a review, I thought, as a literary mugging.' The reviewer, Geoffrey Grigson, had not had one good word to say about a single poem, and it was the last piece that Cecil ever read about his work before he died. It was a cruel blow to one who was always magnanimous, and had spent years of his life helping other writers. It was in character that he behaved stoically. I discovered we were each hiding the review from the other. We were not subscribers to the periodical, but 'well wishers' had posted it.

The *vers d'occasion* are verses with no pretension to being poetry, and they bring me back to his craftsmanship. First of all he made it clear on becoming Poet Laureate that he would try to involve himself in public issues that attracted him and needed support, not just Royal events. The variety of subjects speaks for itself, and I have no doubt that he would feel passionately about any number of the world's problems that concern us all today. As it was, I like to recollect his enchanting, challenging smile (grin, really) when he said to me: 'If I can write some verses on the amalgamation of six Teesside boroughs I shall feel I've really achieved something.' The many admirers of our friend Ronald Searle will look with affection (I hope) on **'A Short Dirge for St. Trinian's'** written when the artist wished to bury the girls formally and finally.

When I edited ***Posthumous Poems*** I did not include, **'At Lemmons',** the last poem he wrote on his deathbed (called by Professor Hynes 'a small masterpiece—reticent and calm, and very moving'). The reason for this is that it had already been included in a selection of ***Poems 1925-1972,*** many of them very much abridged without my fore-knowledge. If I had been consulted, I would not have given permission for the wildly random cuts. 'Either the whole poem or not at all,' I would have said. I wish I had re-published **'At Lemmons'** at the end of ***Posthumous Poems.*** However, the last poem in that volume, **'Children Leaving Home',** was his moving valedictory to Tamasin and Daniel. They must have thought he was detached, which is not uncommon with artists who are preoccupied. In his case it was also a conscious effort 'to ride them on a loose rein' (his phrase). He was an affectionate, reassuring and sage parent who had much to teach me, and here again 'the love is proved in the letting go'. All too soon they had to go forth. They were eighteen and just fifteen.

Cecil is buried in Stinsford churchyard, very near Thomas Hardy. Samuel Hynes said: 'His burial there seems to me entirely appropriate, not because he was of the stature of Hardy, who seems more and more clearly to be the greatest of modern English poets, but because he was of Hardy's company, a decent minor poet in the same tradition. By writing in the English lyric tradition, he helped to keep that tradition alive, and earned his place with Hardy in Stinsford churchyard.' I can picture again that special, gratified smile were he to read such a compliment, and happy incredulity at the knowledge that he was buried there in his beloved Dorset. 'The writing of poetry,' Cecil once wrote, 'is a vocation, a game, a habit, and a search for truth.' His life's work was all of these, and much more.

> . . . *Shall I be gone long?*
> For ever and a day.
> *To whom there belong?*
> Ask the stone to say,
> Ask my song . . .
>
> **'Is It Far to Go?'** ***Poems 1943-1947***

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Bernard O'Donoghue (essay date January-February 2005)

SOURCE: O'Donoghue, Bernard. "'Where Are the War Poets': Poetry and Hope—The Case of C. Day Lewis." *PN Review* 31, no. 3 (January-February 2005): 57-61.

[*In the following essay, O'Donoghue considers the critical neglect of Day Lewis's work and argues for the restoration of "his rightful position side by side" with his fellow World War II poets, Louis MacNeice and W. H. Auden.*]

The year just ended was the centenary of the birth of Cecil Day Lewis, one of the major figures in twentieth-century English poetry by any public measure. He was Poet Laureate; Oxford Professor of Poetry; a Companion of the Royal Society of Literature. He was universally recognised as one of the leading figures in English

poetry across five decades, from the 1930s to the 1970s, as well as a 'great translator', to borrow Deschamps's praise of Chaucer: certainly one of the best translators into English poetry of his century.

So why on earth was he denied his place of honour in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey? I think I know the answer; but I will work round to it by degrees. To begin with, my title comes from one of Day Lewis's most admired anthology-pieces (included, for example, by Philip Larkin in his *Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse*), the poem called **'Where Are the War Poets?'**:

> They who in folly or mere greed
> Enslaved religion, market, laws,
> Borrow our language now and bid
> Us to speak up in freedom's cause.
>
> It is the logic of our times,
> No subject for immortal verse—
> That we who lived by honest dreams
> Defend the bad against the worse.

'Where are the War Poets?', from ***Word Over All*** (1943)

In this short poem, written at the height of the Second World War, C. Day Lewis takes his cue from a poet who often inspired him and provided his models, W.B. Yeats, who wrote at the height of the First World War in 1915 'On Being Asked For A War Poem':

> I think it better that in times like these
> A poet's mouth be silent, for in truth
> We have no gift to set a statesman right;
> He has had enough of meddling who can please
> A young girl in the indolence of her youth,
> Or an old man upon a winter's night.

In the event, of course, Yeats was to write a decidedly opinionated war poem in response to the Dublin rising of 'Easter 1916' the following year. But a comparison of the two poems I have quoted is instructive. Yeats says the poet is at liberty to confine himself to meddling with girls and old men if he wants; there is no obligation of public statement or involvement. By contrast, although it is clear throughout his life that Day Lewis would have dearly liked to allow himself such poetic exemption, he never did. It was a constant theme of his that poetry had to dirty its hands, so to speak: 'pure poetry' was a tempting ideal, but it was an undeniable moral obligation to take public responsibility seriously. In the brilliantly Yeatsian line that clinches his poem—'defend the bad against the worse'—Day Lewis expresses perfectly how unglamorous involvement in public events is likely to be. It is not, to borrow from Yeats on 1916, 'a terrible beauty' but a mundane resistance to 'the worse'. The answer to the question in the poem's title is: 'the war poets are here, obliged to keep their nerve and their principle in the thankless cause of public duty.'

So who exactly was C. Day Lewis (he dropped the Cecil and the hyphen from his writing name at the earliest opportunity), this successor of Yeats who took the moral duties of the poet so seriously and of whom T.E. Lawrence said to Winston Churchill in 1934 that he had 'discovered one great man in these islands. His name is Cecil Day Lewis'? He was born in Ballintubbert, Co. Laois 1904, son of Frank Day-Lewis (double-barrelled to register two family backgrounds, Lewis and Day), a Church of Ireland clergyman (as Anglican vicars in Ireland are still somewhat bizarrely called). His father moved to a parish at Malvern, Worcestershire in 1905, so the poet moved 'From Ireland at the close of my second year' (**'The Whispering Roots'**). Incidentally this fine poem on the stresses of being Anglo-Irish invites comparison with masterpieces of that poetic world such as 'The Colony' by John Hewitt. This is high praise, drawing attention to one of the many categories in which Day Lewis has been under-examined—as an Anglo-Irish poet). Day Lewis's father moved to a parish at Ealing, West London 1908, in the same year that his mother died, when the future poet was four. Here we find one of several striking coincidences with fellow 1930s poet Louis MacNeice: both were born in Ireland, sons of Anglican clergyman. Both of their mothers died when they were very young; they both attended Sherborne School in Dorset. Each wrote a memoir concentrating on his earlier life. Both, to quote MacNeice's 'Autumn Journal', 'like[d] being Irish'. And of course they are both included in the 'MacSpaunday Group' of left-wing Oxford-educated poets associated with the 1930s. In fact they were more similar than acquainted.

In 1917 Frank Day-Lewis moved to the parish of Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire. There the hardships and injustices of mining life made an enormous impact on Day Lewis, aged twelve. There is an interesting contrast here with D.H. Lawrence, twenty years his senior: Lawrence, a miner's son, represents those hardships brilliantly in his short stories but with a cold and dispassionate eye. Day Lewis, an outsider and incomer to them, represents them with fervent sympathy. The contrast can be extended: Lawrence (b.1885), like many major writers in English of his generation, goes Right in politics; Day Lewis (b.1904), like major writers of his, goes Left.

While Day Lewis studied Classics at Wadham College, Oxford, his closest poetic friendship was with W.H. Auden at Christ Church. Day Lewis's earlier poetry struggled openly, but not very successfully, against the

limiting constraints of Georgian verse. His first notable poetic volume was ***Transitional Poem*** in 1929. This was a collection of short poems, originally entitled ***Transitional Poems,*** in the plural, but changed to the singular in recognition of the modernist fashion for poetic sequences, as practised by the great masters Eliot and Yeats. In 1933 ***The Magnetic Mountain*** marked a further change of direction: a left-wing, allegorical poem, with the first signs of what has been called 'industrialized, electrified Utopia'—a kind of poetry favoured by the left-wing 1930s poets, with distant but distracting connexions with Soviet realism.

So when in 1934 Day Lewis produced his first significant prose work, ***A Hope for Poetry*** (the source for the second part of my title here), it was written at a time when he already had a considerable volume of poetry to his credit, at the age of thirty. His was clearly a voice to be reckoned with. This book was one of most influential and admired works in its own time, published in 1934 and reprinted in 1935, 1936, 1939, 1942, 1944, 1945 and 1947: eight editions in thirteen years. It is striking too that this book of poetic hope, founded in political principle, was reprinted three times during the war. Like MacNeice's *Modern Poetry,* Day Lewis's account of Auden, Spender and himself makes the case for 'impure poetry', descending to the everyday and the public. From the third edition, printed two years after the first, and thereafter, the book had a Postscript which added to this discussion of 'impure' poetry a sophisticated and balanced discussion of the limitations of pure poetry, as 'built on a neurosis' which was the attempt to justify the pure poet's 'disassociation from the community'. It will be obvious how this connects with **'Where Are the War Poets?',** the poem I began with. And in its time ***A Hope for Poetry*** was immensely popular for a critical book: even in the period of I.A. Richards, F.R. Leavis, Eliot, early Empson, and MacNeice's *Modern Poetry,* if you were asked to name the foremost critical book on poetry in England in 1936, you might very well have named ***A Hope for Poetry*** (taking over from, say, Leavis's *New Bearings in English Poetry*), as a work more in touch with what was then being written than anything else.

Why exactly was it seen as so important? A crucial part of the failure to understand Day Lewis and his significance (and I think he has been misunderstood as well as underrated for a long time, familiar as his name has remained) is not taking into account that 'important little critical book' (Valentine Cunningham's admiring phrase for it in 1988 in the course of his discussion of the 1930s poets in his magisterial *British Writers of the Thirties*). In a word, it is a matter of seeing where hope lay—and for that matter where it lies for writers today. This sounds sentimental; but it represents something quite specific and indispensable in poetic discussion. What I mean by hope, in the context of Day Lewis's book, is the view that poetry has something distinctive to offer to humanity's common endeavour and is not, in Yeats's tempting phrase, merely 'self-delighting, self-appeasing, self-affrighting'. The view is summarised towards the end of Day Lewis's 'Postscript' to ***A Hope for Poetry*** as follows:

> To the idea of poetry as exclusive, esoteric, a-moral, the private affair of the poet, moving in a different world from prose, creative of its own reality, I should oppose the idea of poetry as catholic, diverse in function, moral, everyone's business (potentially at any rate), assimilating not rejecting prose meaning, a way of synthesising and communicating reality.

It is the opposite of the famous, melancholy conclusion that Auden came to in his great elegy for Yeats near the start of the Second World War:

> For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
> In the valley of its making where executives
> Would never want to tamper.

Day Lewis never reached his friend's disillusion with the capacity, and for that matter the obligation, of poetry to influence events and the lives of executives. Of course not everything he wrote was political; a late anthology-piece like **'The Fox'** is just a masterpiece of observation and description, of a kind that was already evident in the best of his early poems. And he had the classicist's gift for epigrammatic generalisation: 'And love is proved in the letting go.' But he remained always ready to treat public subjects, committed throughout his life to the anti-exclusive, outward-looking conception of the writer, just quoted from the Postscript to ***A Hope for Poetry,*** and implicit in **'Where Are the War Poets?'** The major book on Day Lewis's poetry by his friend Al Gelpi is called *Living in Time,* taken from Day Lewis's own observation 'The poem is an instrument for living in time': entirely suitable as a summary of a poet who stubbornly remained temporal, denying himself the consolation of any transcendental comfort, beguiling as that always was for someone who was the son of a clergyman.

Auden and Day Lewis in the end divide on the Yeatsian question of whether poetry was free to ignore the public world of its time. They had been engaged in a common enterprise since their student days, an enterprise immortalised in the term MacSpaunday, coined by the hostile, right-wing poet Roy Campbell, but which, like many a negatively intended appellation, can be recharged for use as a positive term. The foursome that the term telescopes is MacNeice, Spender, Auden, Day Lewis respectively: all Oxford-educated left-wing poets who in

fact rarely encountered each other and never as a collective: MacNeice was younger and only got to know Auden later. The traditional account of MacSpaunday represents MacNeice as a wary liberal throughout his life—wary indeed because he *was* a liberal. The other three were all very left in the Twenties, in the period from the General Strike when they all sided with the workers. Auden was the first to respond again to the pull of 'pure poetry' and the primary claims of the personal, in the thirties at a time when Spender and Day Lewis were joining the Communist Party: Day Lewis remained in the Party longest, and was the most active. But, as with all general overviews, the reality of MacSpaunday is more complicated. There is no photograph of all four together; there is only one of the three closer associates (Auden, Day Lewis and Spender). And it is striking that when Day Lewis edited *The Mind in Chains* (1937), a collection of ringing essays by the Left, none of his fellow-MacSpaunday poets was in it.

The moral for us, I think, is that later failure to see the full significance of the popularity and admiration for ***A Hope for Poetry,*** and to understand what Day Lewis meant by 'hope'—things which were readily appreciated in his own time—is part of a wider failure in recent English poetry and its discussion. There is a general bias against political writing—often indeed to writing that much concedes at all the existence of a public world of ideas outside the writer's head—which has prevailed with only occasional questioning since the modernist period of the 1920s. You have only to think of the disapproving general response to the poems of Tony Harrison about the various Iraq wars over the past decade, or the eagerness to defend Heidegger against Tom Paulin's unanswerable charge of anti-semitism in *Fivemiletown.* When a major modern poet in English does venture into the public arena in his criticism (I am thinking in particular of Seamus Heaney), he tends to do it through foreign channels. For example one of the finest discussions of the place of literature within present history is Czeslaw Milosz's Charles Eliot Norton lectures from Harvard, *The Witness of Poetry* (1983), and the last of its six lectures is, again, called 'On Hope'. (Day Lewis had also given those lectures in 1964, published as ***The Lyric Impulse*** the next year.) It is making a large claim for Day Lewis; but I suggest that one of the reasons that his recuperation is vital is that a fuller understanding of the importance of poetry as a public language can return with him—and perhaps *only* with the reconsideration of the writers of his time.

As the political poets of the 1930s recognised, theirs was not an easy project. Gelpi concedes that even in the Thirties 'there was no real proletarian poetry, and it fell to leftist poets like Auden's group to begin to clear the way for it': a project founded in hope. There is, as Milosz says, a necessity for hope in our era—as of course in any era. Wilfred Owen's declaration has been much quoted: 'All a poet can do today is warn'. This is not true for us in our hugely media-informed era where we don't need warning, being already in grim possession of the facts. What we do need is revitalising in political terms, and to be cautioned against despair. As Milosz argues, there is a crucial role for hope in politics, for an era that has continued to be dominated—very much so in poetry—by a kind of decadent gloom that has prevailed since Nietzsche and Dostoevsky in the late nineteenth century. For politicians, politics is the art of the possible; but the writer can do a service to politics by reminding it that it must also be the art of the morally desirable, even when that is strategically difficult. And the last time that was recognised in canonical poetry in English ('canonical' is an important qualification of course; Michael Horovitz and, for that matter, musicians like Billy Bragg have kept this principle alive) was by Day Lewis and his contemporaries (which include late Yeats who was also their contemporary: late Yeats too is a 1930s poet even if his politics are more distasteful, as is Campbell's, the coiner of MacSpaunday). But the overtness of their politics makes the Thirties poets a valuable text for the times, times when, in the much-quoted accusation by Adrian Mitchell, most people will go on ignoring poetry as long as poetry goes on ignoring most people. In the chapter 'On Hope' Milosz is uncompromising on this point: 'the élite is engaged in what is called "culture", consisting mostly of rituals attended out of snobbery and borne with boredom'.

The responsibility of poetry for a healthy politics was declared quite expressly in the Thirties in a way that it rarely has been since in English poetry, either in England or America. MacNeice argued for 'Impure Poetry'—poetry that did not shrink from public involvement—in his early campaigning book *Modern Poetry*; Day Lewis argued the case again with persuasive conviction, in his critical masterpiece ***The Colloquial Element in English Poetry*** in 1947. Note the date: Day Lewis held to the principle long after most of his contemporaries had despaired or wearied of it—although it should be stressed that this too is more complicated than a simple chronology makes it. The Thirties poets always maintained some public presence: Auden appeared on the Parkinson show in 1970 when he returned to England (as did John Betjeman); we should not need reminding of the generous public involvement in good cultural causes of Stephen Spender throughout his long life. However, for the most part by now the sad fact is that the case for pure poetry (represented by The Movement and Auberon Waugh's *Literary Review*) is the tri-

umphant norm, despite periodic counterblasts such as Al Alvarez's plea 'Against the Gentility Principle' in 1962. Most of the opponents of pure poetry have backed down and/or changed vote. Not that we should overstate the objections to the Movement poets either of course: many of them were on the political Left, and a declaration of Day Lewis at Hull in 1968 has an air of Movement directness to it: 'I confess to a predisposition for poems that are about something.'

This then is the ideal framework in which to examine C. Day Lewis, and to praise him. How far did he back down? Fundamentally, not at all in the terms in which he always made the case for poetry, often by contrast with his contemporaries. I want to contest the usual view that his poetry changed dramatically, for better or worse, from the politically committed to the personal: from the impure to the pure. The positive interpretation of such an imputed change—the view that it was a change for the better—was put by Auden who wrote to Day Lewis in 1963 to praise the ***Selected Poems***: 'I've always been meaning to write to you about your ***Selected Poems,*** to tell you how delighted I was to find your later poetry so much finer than your earlier. The critics, of course, think our lot stopped writing twenty-five years ago. How silly they are going to look presently.' The argument here, when it is advanced, is that the later poems were more personal and therefore more universal because less confined to the details of the political moment. But the view attributed here to 'the critics' by Auden was the commoner one: that the real virtue of Thirties poets was their political vision, and they lost their distinction by turning their back on it.

Both views are wrong I think: the first more wrong than the second in my view—personal poetry is *not* more universal than public poetry, or at least it shouldn't be thought to be so in principle. If the second were true—if Day Lewis had entirely lost his political vision—it would be a dereliction. But public involvement in various ways remained central to Day Lewis's writing throughout his life. The causes and issues changed, not the conviction. It is why he is eminently suited to a venerable place in Poets' Corner.

In contrast with these general accounts, abetted by his own self-judgement (he was always graciously ungenerous towards his own work: another Movement virtue), a reading of his substantial prose criticism in particular shows him to have been remarkably consistent. Yes, he was a member of the Communist Party in the 1930s and later left it. A progression from the Communist Party to Poet Laureateship and tea with the queen, resting your feet on a corgi (as Day Lewis self-mockingly represents it), does indeed sound like a dramatic move across the spectrum. But any reading of his criticism across his career shows a sustained principle. We could begin in the middle with his finest essay, the brilliant exploration of poetic diction I've already mentioned ***The Colloquial Element in English Poetry*** (given as the R.S. Watson Memorial Lecture at the University of Newcastle in 1947). It should be the first item on every reading-list for poetic diction, and its generalisations should be better known: 'the simple and the colloquial are not synonymous' for example is a neat formula for a principle that became widely held in the following generation. In fact the writer who is most foreshadowed here is Seamus Heaney whose discussions of the creative relations between the spoken language and the formal demands of poetry often parallel Day Lewis's.

It is worth remarking in connexion with this recalling of Heaney that the reader is constantly being struck reading Day Lewis's prose by anticipations of more famous statements of the same insight. In his inaugural lecture as Oxford professor **'The Poet's Task'** in 1951 comes this passage: 'Poetry is a habit. More and more, that is to say, the person who writes verses will find that he is dependent upon it, not only for pleasure . . . He is now, for better or worse, committed to poetry as a way of life.' The reader of Irish poetry cannot fail to be reminded here of Patrick Kavanagh who said you dabble in verses and find it has become your life. But the writer who most comes to mind, particularly in the prose criticism of both writers, *is* Heaney. For example Day Lewis's opposition of ancestored and naïf writers closely mirrors Heaney's sustained reflections on the influence of earlier writers (such as Yeats), by contrast with 'sounding' poets who seem to write by a phonetic impulse. Even more striking is the way that ***A Hope for Poetry*** anticipates Heaney's complex opposition between schooled craft and instinctive technique. I am not suggesting influence here but affinity which in the end may be something more significant anyway.

In turning finally to give a brief account of Day Lewis as poet I will highlight some of his literary relations and contemporaries, confining attention to his own poetry and what might be called broadly his commentary on poetry. I will not be concerned with his most productive and successful writing, the detective-stories published under the name Nicholas Blake: huge sellers both in Britan and America. I am not dealing either with what tends to be called his 'serious novels', autobiographically inspired, of which the first ***Starting Point*** is closely linked to his political concerns in the 1930s. I also do not have space to dwell on his role as translator of Virgil; obviously this is relevant to any consideration of the poetry, but happily there is no need of recuperation here. Everyone recognises his Virgil translations as a major success—especially ***The Georgics*** (1940) and

The Eclogues (the former just translated by the Irish poet-editor Peter Fallon who has declared Day Lewis's English hexameters to be a formidable precedent). There is a striking passage in Day Lewis's short but brilliant reflection **'On Translating Poetry'** (University of Exeter, 1969: the Jackson Knight Memorial Lecture) when he collocates the *lacrimae rerum* passage in the *Aeneid* in his own and Dryden's versions. The two passages are a wonderfully succinct illustration of the contrast between the classical couplets (what in ***The Colloquial Element*** [***The Colloquial Element in English Poetry***] he calls the 'royal language' for poetry) of Dryden's celebrated translation, and the vernacular style his own hexameters lean towards—a diction for poetry that is close to the spoken language. Naturally he draws no conclusions; but I think the Day Lewis version does not suffer in the comparison, once the different objectives in poetic diction are grasped.

I want to end this discussion of Day Lewis's centenary as an occasion for hope by turning to the poetry which I believe, especially in his middle period from about 1935 to 1945, triumphantly vindicates the cultural arguments in which it is founded. The collected poems are available in Jill Balcon's edition which she used as the basis of a ***Selected Poems*** just published by Enitharmon. As will already be clear from what I have been saying, I think the next pressing necessity is a volume of the criticism. I believe the publication of this would restore Day Lewis to his rightful position side by side with MacNeice and Auden: a volume to stand on the shelves beside Auden's *The Dyer's Hand* or the celebrated Oxford volumes of MacNeice's prose.

So what about the poetry? Whatever the case for the prose, for its consistency and imagination, his primary significance is that he was the Poet Laureate of whom I said at the start that he was a prominent figure in the poetry of every decade from the 1930s to the 1970s. His ***Collected Poems*** runs to nearly 750 pages. Famously he said to Philip Larkin (the familiar generosity-cum-modesty again), 'You write too little and I write too much.' I don't think he did, in a writing lifetime that extends for nearly fifty years. But how do we set about restoring Day Lewis's poetry into the popular canon? Part of the resistance to Day Lewis, and to other Thirties writers, has to do with the current resistance to public subjects, as I have said. As far as that goes, they can wait for the fashion to change. There can rarely have been an era in which political opinion was so strongly expressed and political action, in poetry or anywhere else, so little engaged in as ours in English. There is another factor: it has proved strikingly different for the Second World War poets, by contrast with those of the First World War to catch on. For forty years people have been trying to give the same centrality to Alun Lewis and Keith Douglas accorded to Owen, Sassoon and Rosenberg, but it has never quite worked. Day Lewis, as well as a Thirties poet, is also a Second World War poet. Some of his best poems were written during that war when he was in the Home Guard and the Ministry of Information. The poems that he himself liked best, like **'O Dreams! O Destinations!'** retain their power:

> Travellers, we're fabric of the road we go,
> We settle but like feathers on time's flow!

And the poem called **'A Failure'** is a great masterpiece, as good as Auden in evoking writer's block as well as personal and political frustration through its horticultural metaphor:

> Some galloping blight
> From earth's metabolism must have sprung
> To ruin all;
> Or perhaps his own high hopes had made
> The wizened look tall.
>
> But it's useless to argue the why and wherefore.
> When a crop is so thin,
> There's nothing to do but to set the teeth
> And plough it in.

Day Lewis's varying line lengths has a music all of its own: he was a wonderful singer and reader of poetry, gifted supremely with what modern criticism—especially of Irish poetry—calls 'voice'.

So why does Day Lewis remain less discussed than MacNeice? Characteristically he said himself it was because MacNeice was a better poet (indeed, before he really knew MacNeice, he said in the 1930s that MacNeice's first volume of poems was the most significant MacSpaunday product). The current view, in 2004, is that MacNeice was the finer poet—no disgrace of course, since MacNeice stocks are extremely high nowadays. But it is worth recalling that it is not that long since MacNeice too needed—and received—recuperation. Irish poets in the 1970s and 1980s competed for the rights to that task. It is interesting to note, in this context, that Day Lewis has been pretty consistently included in anthologies of Irish poetry: he had five poems in the canon-forming 1958 *Oxford Book of Irish Verse* by Donagh McDonagh and Lennox Robinson for instance, and his Yeatsian poem on Con Markiewicz is included in Brendan Kennelly's *Penguin Book of Irish Verse.* He has remained a consistent presence in British anthologies too: Michael Roberts of course, the editor of *New Signatures* (1932), the small anthology that launched the Thirties poets as a group, included him in his hugely influential *Faber Book of Modern Verse,* and he was kept in it by Anne Ridler who re-

vised it in 1960. (There is a fascinating mutual influence of the 'ploughing in' image at the end of **'A Failure'** with the end of Roberts's introduction to *New Signatures.*) As an indication Day Lewis has nine poems there: the same as Auden and Spender; MacNeice has five and Dylan Thomas four. For that matter, Yeats included eight Day Lewis poems—eight, it has to be said, of his most Yeatsian early pieces—in his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* in 1936. Philip Larkin includes Day Lewis poems in his 1973 *Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse.* They end with **'My Mother's Sister',** Day Lewis's beautiful tribute written towards the end of his life to his aunt Knos (the aunt who brought him up after the death of his mother: another striking coincidence with Heaney whose wonderful poem 'Sunlight' at the start of *North* in 1974 similarly celebrates his child-minding aunt. For that matter MacNeice and Michael Longley also celebrate such an Anticleia figure). Larkin also includes **'Sheepdog Trials in Hyde Park',** dedicated to Robert Frost, a poem whose scrupulous attention to the canine and ovine minutiae of the event might make us forget that this too is a celebration of a public occasion.

In accounting for the neglect of Day Lewis there is another, even more accidental factor. He died at sixty-eight so he could hardly be called long-lived; but, by contrast with MacNeice who died when he was fifty-six, he lived long enough to be encrusted with the honours to which a reaction invariably sets in. It is a great irony that Day Lewis, who championed democratic political causes and made the case so eloquently for the colloquial in poetry, should become celebrated and award-ridden in the poetry establishment, without in the process becoming very popular as a poet. There are many reasons to believe with Auden that his hour will come again, even if 'the critics' do not yet quite look silly for believing that 'our lot' stopped writing in the thirties. Poems like **'The Nabara',** celebrating Basque resistance in the Spanish Civil War, have a power and, I would suggest, relevance to our times which have not been recognised. But that too is a victim of the aesthetic fashions of an age which is resistant to the long poem.

Day Lewis must be credited too for holding to a liberal ideological centre: for not moving dramatically across the spectrum as many 1930s leftists did. Put in those terms it doesn't sound exciting; but it is right. And finally all his endeavours can be gathered together under the heading of social action, from his address to an Adult Education Body at New College, Oxford in 1936, to his writing of socially rooted poems in the 1960s and even willingness to fulfil the public duties of the Poet Laureate, praising Teesside as well as commemorating the investiture of the Prince of Wales. Though like the rest of us he was subject to fits of gloom and uncertainty about his own achievements and capacities, he never lost hope in the common endeavour. He was entirely free of cynicism and incapable of being patronising: virtues that can he felt in everything he wrote. As to whether an age will come when such values will be prized again, as an Act of Hope I am confident that they will. But for certain I can only follow the lead of Jill Balcon at the end of her introduction to the ***Collected Poems*** by quoting the poet himself in the words that appear on his grave:

> *Shall I be gone long?*
> For ever and a day.
> *To whom there belong?*
> Ask the stone to say,
> Ask my song.

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Additional coverage of Day Lewis's life and career is contained in the following sources published by Gale: *British Writers Supplement,* Vol. 3; *Contemporary Authors,* Vols. 13-16, 33-36R; *Contemporary Authors New Revision Series,* Vol. 34; *Contemporary Authors Permanent Series,* Vol. 1; *Contemporary Literary Criticism,* Vols. 1, 6, 10; *Contemporary Novelists,* Ed. 1; *Contemporary Poets,* Ed. 1; *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* Vol. 77; *DISCovering Authors Modules: Poets*; *Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century,* Ed. 3; *Literature Resource Center*; *Major 20th-Century Writers,* Eds. 1, 2; *Modern British Literature,* Ed. 2; *Mystery and Suspense Writers*; *Poetry Criticism,* Vol. 11; *Reference Guide to English Literature,* Ed. 2; and *St. James Guide to Children's Writers,* Ed. 5.

Jaroslav Hašek
1883-1923

(Born Jaroslav Matej Frantisek Hašek) Czech novelist, short story writer, poet, essayist, playwright, editor, and journalist.

The following entry provides an overview of Hašek's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *TCLC,* Volume 4.

INTRODUCTION

Prague-born Hašek is considered a significant European author of the early twentieth century. Known for his unconventional humor and innovative use of language, Hašek authored more than one thousand stories and sketches, as well as newspaper columns, political writings, dramatic works, and poems during his career, all of which explored subjects from his own experiences and observations. His literary reputation, however, rests primarily on his incomplete work, *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za svetové války* (1921-23; *The Good Soldier Schweik*), which is considered one of the first war novels of the twentieth century. Using a style characterized by ironic detachment and playful language, Hašek offered a cynical view of bourgeois society in his satirical work and emphasized the absurdity of the modern world. As a result, the author has often been compared with such satirists as Jonathan Swift and François Rabelais. Although his work has been subject to various critical interpretations, Hašek is generally regarded as a significant figure of avant-garde literature and praised for his inventive style and original narrative perspective. In 1983, Karel Kosík remarked that Hašek's work is "mysterious and full of puzzles," asserting that the author's "genius lies in showing man and his own hero as having great breadth, as spanning the extremes of imbecility and shrewdness, of cynicism, magnanimity and sensitivity, of loyalty to the state and rebellion against it."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Hašek was born Jaroslav Matej Frantisek Hašek on April 30, 1883, in Prague to Katerina and Josef Hašek, both of whom came from farming families in southern Bohemia. Hašek briefly attended secondary school on Zitná Street in Prague but left in 1898 as a result of academic difficulties. Immediately after, he began working in a chemist shop. From 1899 to 1902, Hašek studied at the Commercial Academy on Resslova Street, and upon completing his exams worked at the Slavia Bank. After a year, he left his position to travel and over the next few years visited Slovakia, Hungary, the Balkans, Galicia, Bavaria, Switzerland, Austria, and Bohemia. Having developed an interest in writing as a student, Hašek began recording his observations and experiences while traveling. His first published work, a collection of verse written in collaboration with Ladislav Hájek Domazlicky and titled *Májové vykriky a jiné verse,* appeared in 1903. Prior to World War I, Hašek worked as a publicist and editor but primarily supported himself through the publication of short stories and anecdotes, which appeared under pseudonyms in various magazines and newspapers. He produced numerous narratives, which were purportedly inspired by his own nonconformist lifestyle. In 1904, Hašek became the editor of *Omladina,* a north Bohemian anarchic paper, and later contributed to similar publications, such as *Chudas, Nová omladina,* and *Komuna.* In 1907, however, he was briefly imprisoned for taking part in an anarchic rally, after which he left the movement.

In 1910, Hašek married Jarmila Majerová, a writer, but after the birth of their son two years later, the author left his family and returned to his former lifestyle of wandering, sporadic employment, and heavy drinking. He purportedly contemplated suicide in 1911 and sought treatment in a psychiatric clinic for several weeks. During this time, Hašek supported himself by editing magazines, writing a gossip column, selling dogs, and working in the election office of the National Socialist Party. As a journalist, the author experimented with news material and pictures and produced a series of pranks. He perpetrated his most sensational hoax in 1911, when he took part in a campaign for a by-election to the Imperial Council in Vinohrady, a section of Prague. Although he never officially registered as a candidate, he participated in mock debates, gave speeches, and purportedly earned several dozen votes. During this time, Hašek also participated as a guest actor in Prague cabarets. In February of 1915, the author joined the 91st Infantry Regiment in Ceské Budejovice, and in May of that year traveled to the Galician front. Hašek was taken prisoner during the retreat and sent to prisoner-of-war camps in Dárnice and Totskoye, in Russia, where he survived a typhoid epidemic. In 1916, he enlisted in the Czech Foreign Legion and fought against Austria with the Allies. Within the legion, he worked as a secretary to the

regimental committee and continued to write. After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Hašek traveled to Moscow and became a political activist in the Red Army, serving as an editor, press organizer, and publicist. In 1920, the author returned to the now-independent Czechoslovakia, and the following year moved to the villages of Lipnice and Sázavou, in southeast Bohemia, to continue working on his novel, *The Good Soldier Schweik,* which appeared in installments from 1921 to 1923. His health deteriorated during this time, however, and the work was never fully completed. On January 3, 1923, Hašek died of pneumonia and heart failure.

MAJOR WORKS

Throughout his career, Hašek produced more than twelve hundred short stories, as well as numerous political writings. Many of the stories collected in such volumes as *Pruvodcí cizincu a jiné satiry z cest i z domova* (1913; *The Tourist Guide*) and *The Red Commissar: Including Further Adventures of the Good Soldier Svejk and Other Stories* (1981) were based on legend, as well as the author's own experiences and observations traveling through Europe. Hašek offers a broad, irreverent view of life in eastern and central Europe, including Bavaria and Russia, in tales that range from the lightly ironic to the bitingly satirical. While such stories as "The Struggle for Souls" and "The End of Saint Jura" offer a provocative treatment of the Roman Catholic Church, "Bogumirov, the Serbian Pope, and Mufti Isrim's Goat" and "The Procession of the Cross" provide a more gentle depiction of religion, in this case the Russian Orthodox Church. Other stories, including "My Friend Hanuska" and the cycle "Stories from the Water Bailiff's Watch-Tower at Razice," demonstrate Hašek's sympathy for the marginalized and lower classes, while works such as "Affable Persuasion," "Something Spicy about Legal Arbiters," "The Criminals' Strike," and "The Judicial Reform of Mr. Zakon" convey the author's hostility toward the judicial system, which he found to be inept and despicable. Other tales written throughout his career champion the individual and censure bureaucracy, as well as moral and aesthetic pretense. In the short story collection *Dobry voják Svejk a jiné podivné historky* (1912), Hašek first introduced the character of Schweik (also referred to as Svejk or Švejk), an affable and idiotic soldier whose slapstick mishaps contrast sharply with the rigidity of his military environment. The comedy in the collection is primarily derived from Schweik's exaggerated eagerness to comply with his duties despite his clumsiness.

Although Hašek produced numerous anecdotes and short stories during his career, he is primarily remembered for the unfinished novel, *The Good Soldier Schweik,* which is now considered his masterwork. As some scholars have suggested, the novel reveals the absurdity of military bureaucracy, war, and the Austrian Empire through its emphasis on the excessive zeal of its namesake protagonist. The story begins with the announcement of the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which precipitated World War I, as well as Schweik's arrest for subversion. Schweik is shuffled between jail and an insane asylum but is eventually freed, after which he is drafted for military service, despite the fact that he has rheumatism. Once in service, he is consigned to the garrison jail for malingering but again is eventually released. The protagonist's misadventures continue throughout the novel. In addition to being ordered to Ceské Budejovice to a front-line regiment, he is mistaken for a Russian spy and arrested, then separated from his regiment, and eventually declared a certified imbecile, after which he leaves the military and supports himself by selling dogs with forged pedigrees. As the plot unfolds, Schweik provides paradoxical and hyperbolic commentary and anecdotes, adjusting his style of speaking according to his circumstances. Throughout *The Good Soldier Schweik,* Hašek employs various modes of language, including military jargon and bureaucratic Austro-German speech, the language of contemporary propaganda, and common dialects, as well as the vulgarisms of Hungarian, Polish, and Yiddish. Often classified as a satirical antiwar novel and compared with other works of satire, such as those by Jonathan Swift, *The Good Soldier Schweik* has also been linked to the picaresque form and noted for its episodic plot, which relates the adventures—or misadventures—of its wandering central character. Hašek's depiction of Schweik has been a central topic for many scholars, who have variously interpreted the protagonist as a simple coward, a pragmatic, a saboteur, a crafty egoist, and a folk hero.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Hašek launched his literary career in the early 1900s, contributing fiction to leading periodicals and publishing *Májové vykriky a jiné verse* in 1903. In the years that followed, he developed a reputation for being a politically rebellious and hard-drinking vagrant, a perception fueled by sketches the author wrote purportedly based on his own experiences. Scholars have suggested that this image was, at least partially, a created persona, which Hašek fostered for use in his writing. While the author supported himself by publishing humorous anecdotes and sketches during this time, many of his writings appeared under numerous pseudonyms and did little to further his reputation. A prolific writer throughout his life, it was not until 1921, with the publication of the first volume of *The Good Soldier Schweik,* that Hašek finally achieved financial and popular success. Despite the novel's popularity, initial reviews of the work were not favorable. In addition to concerns re-

garding Hašek's personal reputation, some Czech critics described the subject matter of the novel as "obscene" and objected to the "crude" and "vulgar" language used in the work. Other contemporary critics noted Hašek's "blasphemous" treatment of religion and opposed the antiwar sentiments expressed in the novel, arguing that the protagonist reflected badly on the Czech national character. *The Good Soldier Schweik* was well received abroad, however, particularly in Germany. In 1926, Grete Reiner's German translation and theatrical adaptation of the work stimulated enough excitement that Czech critics were forced to reconsider the literary value of Hašek's final achievement. This reevaluation continued in the decades that followed, and the novel was eventually acknowledged as the author's masterwork.

In more recent decades, scholars have continued to study Hašek's literary contributions. Although his lesser known stories, anecdotes, and political writings have attracted the attention of some commentators, such as Cecil Parrott [see Further Reading] and Alan Menhennet, *The Good Soldier Schweik* remains the work on which Hašek's reputation primarily rests. As in previous decades, the sprawling novel continues to generate critical disagreement, particularly with regard to Hašek's treatment of his namesake protagonist. While some scholars have taken Schweik's naiveté at face value, and thus relegated the novel to the picaresque tradition, others have argued that the protagonist's idiocy is a mask used to thwart Austrian military bureaucracy and characterized *The Good Soldier Schweik* as a cynical commentary on contemporary politics. J. P. Stern, writing in 1968, highlighted Schweik's "integrity" and lack of "personal self-consciousness," describing him as "an undivided hero in a disintegrating world." In contrast, Karel Kosík characterized the protagonist as "simple and shrewd, a lunatic and an idiot," and maintained that his "changeability" is a consequence of his participation in the prevailing political system. A number of critical assessments have focused on Hašek's formal style in the novel. For example, Václav Bělohradský placed the book within the modern tradition, citing its "sophisticated overall construction" as evidence of its kinship with the "European Avant-garde," and Thomas G. Winner, writing in 1988, linked it with "the absurd" and "anticipatory" works of the Dadaist movement. Other studies, including Winner's essay and one by Peter Steiner [see Further Reading], have emphasized the innovative language and "discursive strategies" Hašek employed in his major work. While Winner concentrated on the author's inventive verbal play and inversion of formal expectations, Steiner noted that Hašek "surreptitiously" defied conversational dictums and used "ludic play" to indirectly subvert authority in the work. Although Hašek is not as widely known as some of his contemporaries, he is nevertheless regarded as an important figure of European literature, appreciated for his unflinching humor, his formal innovations, and his original view of the modern world. In his introduction to a 1991 collection of some of Hašek's stories, Alan Menhennet asserted that, "at his most characteristic and effective," Hašek "deals in a reality that blends into phantasmagoria" and offers chaos "as a corrective to a world of order," in which "the price of freedom is eternal comic vigilance." The critic concluded that although freedom does not "confer safety" in Hašek's worldview, it "does confer the gift of laughter," or "the essentially positive response of a comic writer to a comic world."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Májové vykriky a jiné verse [with Ladislav Hájek Domazlicky] (poetry) 1903
Dobry voják Svejk a jiné podivné historky (short stories) 1912
Trampoty pana Tenkráta (short stories) 1912
Pruvodcí cizincu a jiné satiry z cest i z domova [*The Tourist Guide*] (short stories) 1913
Muj obchod se psy a jiné humoresky (short stories) 1915
Dobry voják Švejk v zajetí (novel) 1917
Dva tucty povídek (short stories) 1920
**Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za svetové války.* 3 vols. [*The Good Soldier Schweik*] (novel) 1921-23
Pepícek Novy a jiné povídky (short stories) 1921
Tri muzi se zralokem a jiné poucné historky (short stories) 1921
Mírová konference a jiné humoresky (short stories) 1922
Malá zoologická zahrada (short stories) 1950
Spisy Jaroslava Haska. 16 vols. (short stories, essays, novel, and poetry) 1955-73
The Red Commissar: Including Further Adventures of the Good Soldier Svejk and Other Stories (short stories) 1981
Little Stories by a Great Master (short stories) 1984
The Bachura Scandal and Other Stories and Sketches (short stories) 1991

*This work was also translated and published as *The Good Soldier Svejk and His Fortunes in the World War* in 1973.

J. P. Stern (essay date 1968)

SOURCE: Stern, J. P. "On the Integrity of the Good Soldier Schweik." In *Czechoslovakia Past and Present, Volume II: Essays on the Arts and Sciences,* edited by Miloslav Rechcigl, Jr., pp. 972-82. The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton, 1968.

[*In the following essay, Stern notes the satirical elements in Hašek's* The Good Soldier Schweik *but argues that, despite what many Czech critics assert, the novel*

"is very far from being out-and-out satire." The critic especially highlights Hašek's depiction of his hero and the devices he employs, such as "association and literal-mindedness," to establish Schweik's "integrity."]

The bright idea from which Jaroslav Hašek's masterpiece developed happens to be clearly identifiable. On his somewhat unsteady way into the matrimonial bed after a night out, Hašek wrote the following pencilled note—the date is probably June 1911:

> Pitomec u kumpanie. Dal se sám vyzkoušet, že jest schopen, aby vystupoval jak řádný vojín.[1]
>
> An idiot in the [army] company. He had himself examined [to testify] that he is capable of conducting himself like a proper soldier.

Round this enigmatically phrased idea there emerges a picaresque novel, first published in instalments[2] from 1921 till after Hašek's death in January 1923, a novel constructed on the pattern of "one damn" thing after another". It begins with the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the declaration of war in the summer of 1914. The sequence of the main story is determined by Private Josef Schweik's journey to the war, his various adventures on the way, and his disastrous doings behind the Galician front lines. That war, and the bureaucratic and military machinery set up to keep it going, are presented as corrupt and unjust, senseless and doomed to defeat, yet quite inescapable; this is shown by the fact that however often Schweik "gets lost" on his perambulations through the country, he always ends up with his battalion, for "all roads lead to the War". The War dominates each man's life—at least, the outward circumstances and events of each life—and the movements of war give what shape there is to the novel as a whole.

The world that fills out this pattern is constructed on a peculiar principle of verbal and factual associations; and the language represents a very rich and original retracing of the vernacular, nicely differentiated according to class and, above all, according to the level of education of each speaker. There is, I believe, something characteristically Czech in the way that cultural differences are reflected in each character's grammar, his choice of words, and even his syntax (which, incidentally, is one of the many obstacles in the way of an English translator)[3]. That these are based on differences in education becomes clear when we compare the merely unslangy and precise language of Schweik's platoon commander, First Lieutenant Lukáš, with the choice and involuted language of the company cook, Jurajda, where the former is a professional officer in the Imperial Army, while the latter has a university degree and is described as an occultist and metaphysician by profession.[4] Then again, in the case of the infamous Lieutenant Dub (like Hašek's father, Dub is a secondary schoolmaster in civilian life, but I have heard it said that he is modelled on a well-known Czech linguist)[5]—verbal precision and pedantry are used to achieve a satirical end, for Dub's pretentious utterances are filled with the clichés of Austrian, that is, anti-Czech, war propaganda.

However, contrary to our expectations (and to the claims of Czech literary criticism)[6], Hašek's imitation of the vernacular does not descend to the level of naturalism. Thus, phonetic transcriptions are neither consistently used nor are they very close; as in Kipling, they are of the most conventional kind. Furthermore, the language is set off with surprising formal grammatical constructions, and consequently retains a good deal of dignity.[7] An example of this effective formality is Hašek's use of present participles, which would not occur at all in a naturalistically rendered Czech narrative. Again, the basic intention is satirical, especially when (as happens surprisingly often) a New Testament reference is added:

> A tak, stoupaje po schodišti . . . k výslechu, Švejk nesl svůj kříž na vrchol Golgothy, sám ničeho nepozoruje o svém mučednictví.[8]
>
> And so, mounting the stairs . . . for his cross-examination, Schweik bore his cross to the summit of Golgotha, himself unaware of his martyrdom.

But I suggest that the effect is not merely satirical, that both these formal grammatical turns and the many references to Christ have a peculiarly ambivalent—that is, partly serious—effect. When Schweik, on leaving the maddened Lieutenant Dub, mutters to himself, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me,"[9] the sentence leaves the reader bewildered and even strangely moved—moved, that is, to ask what connection there might be between the passion of Christ and the journey of the good soldier Schweik.

I hasten to reassure you at this point: I am not trying to make a Christian allegory of the novel. Let me add that even the one man in the book who is described as "one of the few who still believed in God" (iv, 244), the Padre Martinec, is shown up as both feeble and corrupt, though not ill-intentioned. But I do suggest that these New Testament references are far from being merely satirical, that they belong to a hidden positive image of the central character; to describe him as a scoundrel and a pleasure-seeking cynic (as Arne Novák has done)[10] seems to me entirely off the mark.

The political intention behind the satire is obvious enough throughout: it is anti-Austrian and anti-Hungarian,[11] pro-patriotic Czech, anti-militarist. Decent Czechs are shown to oppose, sabotage, or ridicule the Austrian war effort, but the end toward which they are doing this is not shown; the Czech legions in Russia, and Professor Masaryk, their leader, are mentioned near

the end of the book, but Hašek's death, pen in hand, prevented him from elaborating any theme of active opposition. The several groups of men who are linked by Schweik's pilgrimage are all more or less at the mercy of a war machine to whose aims they are more or less indifferent or hostile. Various cogs in this machine—imbecile staff officers and generals, corrupt military priests and judges, foolish aristocratic ladies masquerading as nurses, and the chief cog, the ancient Emperor ("stařičký mocnár") Franz Joseph and his advisers—all these are drawn into the satire, but they are rarely (iii, 44) presented in that white heat of indignation, and never with that verbal intelligence, which we find in Karl Kraus's contemporary *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit.* In the third book (104) Schweik explains to Lieutenant Lukáš why he stole a hen for his dinner:

> "Poslušně hlásím", řekl přívětivě Švejk, "že se rozhodně nemůže vo nic jinýho jednat než vo mejlku. Když jsem dostal ten váš rozkaz, abych vám někde zaopatřil a koupil něco dobrýho ke snědku, tak jsem počal uvažovat, co by tak asi bylo nejlepšího. Za nádražím nebylo vůbec nic, jenom koňský salám a nějaké sušené oslí maso. Já jsem, poslušně hlásím, pane oberlajtnant, všechno dobře rozvážil."
>
> "Beg leave to report, sir", Schweik said pleasantly, "that there must certainly be a mistake somewhere. When you give me that there order to get hold of something good for your dinner, I started thinking what might be best. Behind the station you couldn't get a thing, only horsemeat sausage and some dried donkey steaks. Beg leave to report, sir, I pondered everything very carefully."

Now, this last phrase is a well-known quotation from Franz Joseph's *Manifesto to his Peoples* of August 1914, "Ich habe alles reiflich erwogen." But the satire is quite unemphatic, no issue is made of the phrase, and the whole passage is important only because it ends with one of Lukáš's outbursts, in which he loses his temper so completely that he berates Schweik in the familiar second-person singular, whereas on almost all other occasions he addresses him in a civil and even quite dignified manner.

The satirical vein is patent throughout, though occasionally it degenerates into unfunny abuse (i, 81). The satire is derived from absurd situations, not from corrupt language, and it is not absolute satire. By this I mean that it is essential to Hašek's scheme that Schweik, the medium through whom the corruption is satirised, should remain in constant contact with the world around him. Throughout the story Schweik's patter finds ready listeners high and low; and the fact that he isn't immediately interrupted by his superiors and brutally disposed of is, within Hašek's scheme of things, still credible (as it would not have been in Hitler's war). Hašek, of course, operates with immense poetic license. Yet the license is acceptable because the satire is not all black, and because the condemnation it implies is not absolute: Schweik belongs to the world that encompasses him, and occasionally he can even change a bit of that world for the better.

Similarly, Hašek's social concern is undogmatic and unemphatic: "ordinary people"—mainly the private soldiers—are right, the lower-middle and upper classes—Germanising officers, Austrians, and Jews—are usually in the wrong, and one can easily tell in whose company one is. The message in all this is clearly at odds with the tenets of socialist realism. Hašek upholds a private integrity in the face of bureaucratic intrusion, and implicitly recommends a behaviour which, from the point of view of the organisation against which Schweik defends himself, can only be described as asocial and anarchic. To ask what results this sort of behaviour would have in a different political context would indeed be to ask a question of cardinal importance for the subsequent history of Bohemia and Moravia.

The most intriguing question the novel raises concerns the "simplicity", "honesty", "wide-eyed naïveté", and "goodness of heart" of its hero, which are asserted in countless passages. Is he (to put it in the terminology of the British Army) "plain hopeless" or is he "hopeless with intent"? Is the consistent way in which he responds to given situations part of a private strategy? Is that strategy conscious? Occasional remarks by the author suggest just this: they suggest that the character of "congenital idiot", "malingerer of feeble mind", and "certified moron" is consciously assumed. Yet these few disclosures of what Schweik "really" is appear to be inadvertent; they remain isolated from the rest of the text, and nothing is made of the knowledge they convey to the reader. (Similarly, there is only one occasion in the whole book, that is, when Schweik forces the hapless orderly Kunert to complain to Captain Ságner of his treatment by Lieutenant Dub, when Schweik is described as serious and almost angry.)[12] If, indeed, there is a secret at the core of Schweik's character, then that secret is shared by no one, not even by officer-cadet Marek, the nearest thing we get to a self-portrait of the author. Considering that all the figures in the book are seen in relation to the hero, and hardly ever independently, this is surprising. His relation to Schweik determines each man's position on Hašek's implied moral scale, which stretches from "decent-patriotic" to "corrupt pro-Austrian", yet none shares the secret of Schweik's integrity. You may take it whichever way you like: if Schweik is taken as "plain hopeless", then clearly he confides in everybody; if as "hopeless with intent", then he confides in nobody at all, not even those who appear to wish him well. Of course, his more outrageous idiocies are committed in contact with his superiors, whereas with his fellow soldiers he shows a

great deal of sound common sense.[13] Yet these different and appropriate responses spring from a single mind—or, at least, from a mind whose complexity is not disclosed.

Hašek does not portray a man who knows one thing and does another, like Cervantes in Sancho Panza.[14] He does not probe into the recesses of Schweik's consciousness; in some ways we must think of Hašek as occupying a place in Czech literary history comparable to Smollett's or Defoe's in English. Above all, he is no Dostoyevsky. The kind of psychological analysis of *his* idiot's character that Dostoyevsky achieves—one thinks of the revealing scene between Myshkin and Mme. Yepanchin—has no parallel here. What Hašek stresses is, quite simply, Schweik's candour.

While most people around him are scroungers, he is content with his lot and wants for nothing. His only possessions are a pipe and a knapsack, and, after his disastrous adventures in a Russian prisoner's uniform, a brand-new rig-out rejoices his heart. He drinks whatever he can get, but steals neither food nor alcohol for himself. His only amorous adventure, with one of his lieutenant's mistresses, is put in his way by mere chance, and his purpose in visiting the military brothel is to rescue his superior officer.[15] His background is sparsely drawn. We are told twice that his brother is a "professor", but this disclosure is made merely to explain, if that is an explanation, why the stories he has to tell are so complicated. In civilian life he dealt in stolen and rejuvenated mongrels, but when he explains that he faked pedigrees, painted fancy spots on mangy dogs, and cleaned their teeth with emery paper in order to please his customers, we accept the explanation quite readily; to impute to him purely pecuniary motives doesn't fit his character. Not honesty but lunacy is his best guide in a lunatic world—the lunacy of a sleepwalker.

Such then are the means Hašek uses to preserve the integrity of Schweik's character in the reader's imagination. Moreover, this integrity is effective in Schweik's contact with others, above all with Lieutenant Lukáš. The nature of Hašek's narrative demands that its unity remain precarious. The only development I can discern (and that a rudimentary one) occurs in Schweik's relationship with Lieutenant Lukáš, who, as one example of Schweik's "idiocy" follows another, comes to accept, perhaps even to understand and in some way to respect, not, indeed, Schweik's cunning, but his integrity. Once more Hašek is secretive: again and again, Lukáš's growing fondness of Schweik gives way to outbursts of exasperation, but a difference for the better is wrought in his character as he comes to accept, if not to know, the "certified idiot".

Generally speaking, Hašek uses two comic devices to establish and give substance to this integrity: association and literal-mindedness. The peculiar associative principle on which Schweik's never-ending anecdotes are constructed is fundamental to the whole book. A splendid example of this patter—"žvanění"—occurs in the first two pages of the book:

> "Tak nám zabili Ferdinanda", řekla posluhovačka panu Švejkovi.
>
> . . . . .
>
> "Kerýho Ferdinanda, paní Müllerová?" otázal se Švejk, nepřestávaje si mazat kolena, "já znám dva Ferdinandy. . . ."
>
> "So they've killed our Ferdinand", said the charwoman to Mr. Schweik.
>
> . . . . .
>
> "Which Ferdinand, Mrs. Müller?" asked Schweik, continuing to massage his knees, "I know two Ferdinands. . . ."

What happens here, and throughout the book (to put the matter briefly and obscurely), is an exploration of the possible as opposed to the relevant data of a situation. Thus, the mention of one Ferdinand brings up the mention of all the Ferdinands Schweik knows, then of everything he knows about that particular Ferdinand (e.g., "když honil ty báby na Konopišti": "how he used to chase those women in his summer residence"); the mention of the Archduke's murder in a car brings up the mention of all that Schweik knows of cars, of Bosnia, of his experiences with explosive weapons, and (relating to Ferdinand's corpulence) the necessary size of targets, and so on. Schweik makes nonsense of the actual—here it is the public sphere—by exploring it in terms of his purely personal range of experience. To be precise, all these Ferdinands he goes on about are wholly irrelevant to the Sarajevo murder; to be more precise, the Sarajevo murder is wholly irrelevant to Schweik. To be precise, his patter is meaningless; to be more precise still, the patter is the most meaningful protection of his person and integrity that is available to him against the meaninglessness of history.

Schweik is thus the very opposite of the "existential" and "alienated" hero: he renders the hostile world harmless by domesticating it and making it familiar.

Since the book bulges with examples of this sort of familiarising association, I shall give one more illustration, this time rather more complicated. Schweik has been caught behind the Galician front, wearing a Russian uniform, and he is condemned as a deserter. (As usual, of course, the charge is absurd; he was merely trying on the uniform after finding it on a river bank.) After several cross-examinations during which he readily admits to the facts and indignantly repudiates the intention, he is condemned to death. When Padre Martinec comes to visit him in his cell, Schweik instantly assumes that Martinec too is there as a prisoner,

and begins to ply him with story after story to comfort him. (Actually, Martinec's dejection is due to a combination of hang-over and bad conscience.) One of these stories (the involutions are almost inscrutable) concerns a certain gentleman Schweik once knew in Prague, who found himself accused of pimping. So he comes to visit Schweik,

> . . . "náramně rozčílenej a nesvůj, jako by ho právě byli před chvilkou vytáhli zpod ochrannýho rámu u elektriky a ukradli mu přitom hodinky. . . ."
>
> (iv, 258.)

> ". . . beside himself with excitement, as though he had just been pulled out from under the cow-catcher of a tram and had his watch pinched in the process . . ."

Now the simile about the tram is absurd enough; and when it is capped with the gag about the stolen watch, we seem to be in the realm of free association. Yet that crowning irrelevance contains a truer comment on human nature than any the pious parson has uttered; and we suddenly become aware that the whole elaborate story has a peculiar bearing on the Padre's doings in the officers' mess; that Schweik was not all that wrong in thinking of him as a prisoner; and that their reversal of rôles—where Schweik does the comforting and the Padre listens like a penitent sinner—is not so preposterous after all but, on the contrary, accurately reflects the moral situation of the two men.

Now this patter is not, I think, a sign of literary incontinence on Hašek's part, nor is it merely an adventitious device to fill in "background". Leaving aside the question of consciousness—Schweik's consciousness, or Hašek's, for that matter—the flow of the anecdotes is a part of Schweik's strategy; it is the means that enables him to assert and protect his private person, an essential part of his own anti-heroic war against the Austro-Hungarian state and *its* war. The virtue of the novel and its flaw are inseparable: the associative device is at once an essential part of its scheme and also disruptive of it. The pseudologic of Schweik's anecdotes (where "this reminds me of a man I used to know . . ." is followed by a story the relevance of which is, at best, oblique) is immensely funny; it emerges as a mirror of, and a foil to, the pseudologic and irrelevance of the War itself as Hašek saw it.

Equally effective (that is, equally protective) is Schweik's literal-mindedness, the way he takes every order seriously and fulfils it "to the letter", that is, far beyond what could be "reasonably" expected of him if the situation were one in which "reasonable" expectations were justified. But they are not, and hence it is quite proper for Schweik to pursue an action until it results either in the opposite of what was intended or, more simply, in chaos: and from that chaos Schweik emerges, solemnly marching along, with a benign smile, unharmed.

Literal-mindedness and anecdotal flow alike derive from much the same sort of logic. Each time Schweik's conduct, or patter, is a "logical" response to a very narrow, very particular situation; obediently pursuing the possibilities of that situation, he makes anarchic nonsense of the general. On a first plane of meaning, he has literally obeyed Lukáš's order to get him a decent dinner (or, on an earlier occasion, a thoroughbred dog); on a second plane, he has violated that order by stealing; yet again on a third plane, he has done what is generally done and, by unhesitatingly admitting it, has shown up the hypocrisy, or absurdity, of the entire world at war, at the same time gaining for himself an alibi and a safe-conduct.

Again, in spite of what Czech critics assert, we must understand that this is very far from being out-and-out satire.[16] Schweik's tricks work because the opposing authority allows that they should work. The proof that the ethos against which he protects himself is not totally hostile lies in the simple fact that Hašek never allows Schweik's obedience to result in anything worse than chaos. The possibility of its resulting in a crime is just not envisaged. The situation is not wholly unlike that of Gandhi and the British Raj: like Gandhi's disobedience campaign, Schweik's obedience campaign is effective because, each time, the conflict proceeds according to rules recognized by both sides. Where there are no such rules—as in the German occupation of 1939-45—there, Schweik's strategy is bound to fail; in that situation, he will either go to the gallows or become a collaborator.

The personal integrity that Hašek's narrative devices help to establish is a very concrete thing, but it is not to be confused with the idea of bare physical survival (as I think Brecht confused it). There is that too. The task of keeping body and soul together, of going through the holocaust and emerging unharmed, is formidable enough. But beyond that, Schweik's is a serene integrity, involving equanimity and good humour. It is a private virtue that gives out warmth and light to others, though again only to the extent that they become private persons. Since it is also a passive virtue—a way of keeping alive and preserving what was implanted in the character from the beginning—there is, instead of a consequential development, the secret and the charm of the undivided hero in a disintegrating world. Schweik is perhaps the only genuine popular creation of European literature in the twentieth century, popular in the sense both of being modelled on the lower classes and also of immediately and intuitively appealing to them. It is hard to be patriotic without being sentimental; but perhaps one may be allowed to add that he shares this peculiar integrity with the Czech people.

That Hašek was a natural story-teller and born writer, indeed a "natural," needs no demonstration; that he was forever engaging in elaborate and ambitious practical

jokes—jokes which started with the purpose of undermining the Austrian police state and ended up, as great jokes always do, remote from their ultimate purpose—all this we know from his biographers, as we know, too, that his jokes can not have endeared him to the Communist Party[17] when he returned from Russia after the First World War. I mention all this in support of my view that there is no literary self-consciousness to be discovered in the novel, just as there is no personal self-consciousness to be found in the hero. (The critic is thus in the unenviable position of saying things which would have surprised the author.) But, unlike F. X. Šalda,[18] I believe that in this lack of self-consciousness lie the charm and the greatness of the novel. It seems to me that we have to do with the work of a great joker, a joker of genius, whose satirical intention blends with, but often recedes behind, the great joke. It appertains to the nature of such a "natural" that he should be taken in by his own joke, that by taking it seriously he should succeed in making of it an almost consistent and undivided reality.

Notes

1. A facsimile of this note is reprinted in: *Jaroslav Hašek ve fotografii* (Prague, 1959), p. 42; the rest of the note is illegible.
2. Cf. R. Pytlík and M. Laiske, *Bibliografie Jaroslava Haška* (Prague, 1960).
3. The English translation by Paul Selver (London, 1930), has a great many felicities and tries hard to be faithful to the text, at least in the first two parts; after that, the number of omissions increases, so that the English text turns out to be about one-third shorter than the Czech. This is partly due to some prudishness of the translator's; he also seems to have got bored with Schweik's anecdotes. The translations in this paper are my own.
4. Book iii, p. 139. I quote from the recent two-volume ed., *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka* (Prague, 1960). Josef Lada's pictures, done especially for this edition, are much cruder than those he did for the first edition, which was published by Hašek's friend, Franta Sauer.
5. *I.e.,* J. Trávníček. Photographs of the real counterparts of several of Hašek's figures are shown in the volume mentioned in note 1, above.
6. *E.g.,* F. Daneš, "Příspěvek k poznání jazyka a slohu Haškových *Osudů* . . ." in *Naše řeč,* 1954, pp. 124-9; also, M. Jankovič, "Umělecká pravdivost Haškova Švejka" in *Rozpravy Československé akademie věd a umění,* no. 10 (1960), p. 27.
7. Perhaps this is what Arne Novák had in mind when he spoke of Hašek's "antiquated verbal means" ["zastaralými prostředky slovesnými . . ."], in *Dějiny české literatury,* part vii (Prague, 1933), pp. 191-2.
8. i, 26; Sometimes this sort of construction goes wrong: ". . . hostinskej mu řekl, že všechno na světě snese, jenom ne vožralýho člověka, kterej se jinde vožera a přijde k němu vystřízlivět . . ." (iii, 186).
9. iii, 123; cf. St John, xvi, 16.
10. ". . . typ šaška a zbabělce, idiota a požívačníka cynika a sprost'áka . . ." When Novák goes on to say that Schweik "popírá nejen válku, ale i stát, mužnou čest, hrdinství a vlastenectví" ["denies not only the war but also the state, manly honour, heroism and patriotism"], he is indeed in deep waters.
11. —though Schweik magnanimously remarks that "there is many a Hungarian who can't help being Hungarian" ["Někerej Mad'ar taky za to nemůže, že je Mad'ar"] ii, 359.
12. Captain Ságner is an exception to the simple rule that characters with German names are evil or ridiculous; thus, Hašek changed the name of the real Lieutenant Lukas to Lukáš.
13. M. Jankovič, *op. cit.* pp. 48-9.
14. *Don Quixote* is one of the few books mentioned by Hašek, but the connection between the two novels, suggested by many critics, seems to me far from obvious. To establish it, one would have to see in Schweik a combination of Sancho's practical successes (which result from a cunning that Schweik does not possess) and the Don's naïveté and candour (which lead to disasters that Schweik does not encounter).
15. Hašek is quite sparing with pornographic scenes and downright obscenities, unlike his friend Karel Vaněk, whose continuation of the story is in every way inferior.
16. In June 1917, while serving with the Czech legions in Kiev, Hašek published a little book concerning Schweik's adventures in Russian captivity, *Dobrý voják Švejk v zajetí.* There, the satirical intention is much more fully realized, and Schweik's duplicity and cunning are stressed, but the book is not very funny. Hašek used the name and figure of the good soldier Schweik for the first time in a series of little brochures published in Prague in 1911 (*Dobrý voják Švejk a jiné povídky.* Vychází v Knihovně humoru a satiry v sešitech po 30. hal., ilustrováno K. Stroffem). Since these are reprinted in his collected works now appearing in Prague, it should be possible to find out how many of Schweik's anecdotes Hašek incorporated in the novel.
17. He joined the Communist Party in Russia in 1915. His earlier political career was varied; he was,

among other things, a founder member and chairman of a "Party for Moderate Progress within the Bounds of the Law".

18. Cf. *Zápisník,* vol. vii, Prague, 1934, p. 127: "one cannot speak of any consciousness or purposefulness [uvědomění . . . a záměrnost] in Schweik; he is, therefore, poetically not as great and considerable as his various admirers would have us believe."

    The Communist critic Julius Fučík (who was executed by the Germans in 1941) looks at the question of Schweik's consciousness from a political point of view. In an essay written in 1928, "Against Schweik" ("Válka se Švejkem"; I quote from M. Jankovič, *op. cit.* pp. 60 ff), Fučík concludes that Schweik is an "essentially non-revolutionary man" because he lacks "the power and above all the conscious intention [nemá dost sil a hlavně ne uvědomění] to do away with the political apparatus [of the Austro-Hungarian state] by means of direct action". By 1939, the situation has radically changed, and Fučík is no longer concerned with the character as it appears in Hašek's book. His aim now is to enlist the image of Schweik in the struggle against the German enemy; Fučík therefore endows Schweik with a potential revolutionary mentality: "His development, which recalls Hašek's development, is only just moving towards a full consciousness, and you feel that, at a given moment, Schweik will become serious and then, when things get tough, still joking, he will seriously and purposefully get down to the business of fighting." ["Jeho vývoj, připomínající vývoj Haškův, jde teprve k plnému uvědomění a přímo cítíš, jak Švejk v určitém okamžiku zvážní, nepřestane snad dělat vtipy, ale přitom, až půjde do tuhého, bude velmi vážně a důkladně bojovat."] Given the desperate situation of 1939, one must respect Fučík's argument as a statement of what should be, not of what is, the case. But his earlier (1928) insight is the truer one. The novel contains no revolutionary intimations; and it is beyond the scope of this paper to decide whom history proved right—the hopeful Fučík or the realistic Hašek.

Karel Kosík (essay date 1983)

SOURCE: Kosík, Karel. "Hašek and Kafka: 1883-1922/23." *Cross Currents* 2 (1983): 127-36.

[*In the following essay, Kosík maintains that the traditional, "idealistic" reading of* The Good Soldier Schweik *as a pleasurable comedy is inadequate, suggesting instead that the novel is more grotesque than comic, and in this respect it deserves, like the work of Hašek's fellow-Czech writer, Franz Kafka, a "modern scholarly analysis."*]

1. Kafka and Hašek

Hašek and Kafka were born in the same year in the same city. They both spent most of their lives in Prague, and it was in Prague, at about the time of the First World War, that they wrote the works for which they became world-renowned. They died within one year of each other, at the beginning of the twenties. But of course these facts are routine, superficial and coincidental, and in themselves don't tell us very much about the relationship between Hašek and Kafka.

We can invert out perspective on the problem, though, and ask what kind of environment gave rise to two such different phenomena as Hašek and Kafka. What kind of Prague is Kafka's Prague, and what is the Prague of Hašek? Both men enriched the fame of their birthplace. Their work is linked to Prague, and to a certain extent Prague is depicted in it. Švejk's "odyssey under the honorable escort of two soldiers with bayonets" takes him from the Hradčany garrison jail along Neruda Street to Mala Strana and over the Charles Bridge to Karlín. It is an interesting group of three people: two guards escorting a delinquent. From the opposite direction, over the Charles bridge and up to Strahov, another trio makes its way. This is the threesome from Kafka's *Trial*: two guards leading a "delinquent," the bank clerk Josef K., to the Strahov quarries, where one of them will "thrust a knife into his heart." Both groups pass through the same places, but meeting each other is impossible. Švejk was let out of jail—as is the custom—early in the day, and he and his guards made the journey just described before noon; while Josef K. was led in the evening hours by two men wearing top hats, "in the moonlight."

But let's imagine that these two groups were to meet. They pass each other without paying attention, because Joseph K. is preoccupied with studying the physiognomy and behavior of his mysterious attendants, while Švejk is completely absorbed in friendly conversation with his guards. On the other hand, the two groups *might* look at each other as they meet. The look would be one that does not see. People often look at each other without recognizing who they are. And indeed, who are they?

Josef K. finds Hašek's trio excessively comical and only that, without the deeper unexpected meaning that deciphers the world of farce; similarly, Josef Švejk sees Kafka's trio as a comical apparition which obscures the real, grotesquely tragic fate of Joseph K. Both see only the external appearance of the other, and so they are indifferent to each other.

This is one imaginable encounter of Hašek and Kafka, one which touches only the surface. From the authors, however, we might proceed to a second level, that of

their work. Is it at all possible to compare and to connect the work of Hašek and the work of Kafka? At first glance there seems to be no relation. Kafka is read to be interpreted, while Hašek is read to make people laugh. There exist dozens, even hundreds of interpretations of Kafka. His work is perceived and accepted as full of problems and problematical, as enigmatic, puzzle-like and cryptical, accessible only through decoding—in other words, through interpretation. Hašek's work, on the other hand, seems completely clear and understandable to everybody; his work is naturally transparent, provoking laughter and nothing more. But isn't this naturalness and transparence only illusory, and in this sense deceitfully misleading?

Western interpreters have applied to Kafka's work a number of different methods of analysis, from psychoanalysis, structural analysis, sociological and anthropological research, and the search for theological, religious and philosophical aspects, to the investigation of connections with the ideological worlds of Judaism, Christianity, of Kirkegaard, Dostoevsky, and so on, thus exhausting the entire range of interpretive possibilities. In contrast, with regard to Hašek we seem to have one master key which unlocks all his work: the principle of "popular appeal" so celebrated in our country. However, Hašek's "popular appeal" does not illuminate his work; on the contrary, it hinders access to it, for it prevents us from understanding its essence.

What kind of sense is made by Hašek's work? Does ***The Good Soldier Švejk*** really lack a unified structure, and is its narrative fragmented? What is the point of all its anecdotes? Are there to be found, in Hašek's work, problems of time, of comedy, tragedy and of the grotesque?

And who is Švejk?

2. Who Švejk is not

Švejk is the servant of army chaplain Katz and later of the lieutenant Lukas. Masters give orders and servants carry them out. A master is an intention, and the servant is the realization of that intention. But since orders are so general and take a definite shape only when they are implemented, it is possible for the servant to turn against the master; during the carrying out of an order so many unforeseen circumstances may develop that the master can no longer recognize *his* idea in the *servant's* realization of it. The servant is only a tool of the master's intention, but because he acts, he creates a situation which is the reverse of the master's original intention. The master forces the servant to be attentive to him, and so the servant knows his master well; he knows his strengths and his weaknesses. It is enough for the master to have rank and power, but the servant must be inventive and enterprising. Who in this relationship of dependence is really the master, and who the servant? Who imposes his will on whom, and who is the one who acts?

In certain divisions of labor, the servant has only one role: he amuses the master. He then becomes a servant of a special kind—a court jester. He does no manual labor; instead, he works with his head, as an intellectual. Is a jester independent? He gives that impression. He speaks impertinently to the ruler, and he enjoys what is even in court society an unusual privilege, that of "telling the truth." The jester comments on what is going on around him and contributes his wit to the court scene. Because he's employed by the court, however, he has to play by the court rules: his insolence must be only the impertinence of a jester, and his truth is always the jester's truth. He can function in his role only as long as the others accept him and respect him in that role. If he goes beyond the prescribed or the recognized and tolerated limits, he is no longer taken seriously, or, on the contrary, he begins to be taken too seriously; he becomes either boring and useless or he is exposed as an insolent troublemaker, a hypocrite, a malcontent. "Many rulers," as Erasmus of Rotterdam observed, "cannot even breakfast without a jester and prefer the company of jesters to that of philosophers, who have confidence in their erudition and who often offend the delicate ear of the sovereign with the grating truth."

Švejk is a servant, but he is not a jester. At times he acts like a crazy fool, but a fool becomes a jester only when he offers his madness in service to a ruler. When Švejk insolently speaks his fool's truth, he does not act as a servant, and the role that complements his is not that of a master but rather that of a bureaucrat. Lieutenant Dub, who is a petty official, doesn't understand jokes and can't even laugh; his only ambition is to drive Švejk to tears. A petty bureaucrat moves in a space that is sacred, inviolable, closely guarded. He is extremely suspicious of laughter. Whoever laughs, laughs *at him.* He is egocentric and irritable. He wants to watch over everything, and to have everything under his control. He tells people what they may laugh at and what they are allowed to look at.

> "What's happened here?" One could hear the stern voice of Lieutenant Dub, as he stepped directly in front of Švejk.
>
> "Humbly report, sir," answered Švejk for all of them, "we're having a look down."
>
> "And what are you having a look at?" shouted Lieutenant Dub.
>
> "Humbly report, sir, we're having a look down into the ditch."
>
> "And who gave you permission to do that?"

Švejk is not the servant of this bureaucrat. His relationship to the Lieutenant Dub is not based on a direct personal dependency; instead, it is defined by a very complicated system of legal rules. Švejk is separated from Lieutenant Dub by the intricacy of the military hierarchy, which makes it impossible for the official to treat Švejk as a servant. Švejk and the official are of two different worlds that do not tolerate each other. Švejk, merely by his existence and physical presence, provokes the official, because he doesn't look where he's supposed to look, because he doesn't stand where he's supposed to stand, because he doesn't say what he's supposed to say. Švejk doesn't take part in the game. He doesn't want to be promoted and to have a career, and because of this he doesn't follow the rules of the game. Because he's not in the game, he spoils the game without knowing it; he is dangerous and suspect *against his will.*

What kind of relationship exists between Švejk and the person who plays against him, and what exactly is the role that complements his? Is he the servant of a master, is he jester to a ruler, is he the idiot in a relationship between a lunatic and a petty bureaucrat? Or is he a modern Sancho Panza, that is, a servant without a master?

3. A grotesque world

In the county jail Švejk tells his fellow prisoners a story:

> . . . you mustn't lose hope. It can still change for the better as the gypsy Janeček said in Pilsen, when in 1879 they put the cord round his neck for double robbery with murder. He was right in his guess, because at the very last moment they took him away from the gallows, as they couldn't hang him owing to its being the birthday of his Imperial Majesty . . . So they hung him the next day after the birthday had passed. But just imagine the luck the bastard had, because the day after that he was given clemency, and they had to give him a new trial as everything pointed to the fact that it was another Janeček who had committed the crime. So they had to dig him up from the prison graveyard and reinstall him in the Catholic graveyard at Pilsen. But then it came out that he was Protestant, so then they took him to the Protestant cemetery and then . . .

This passage, which is neither atypical nor unique, evokes in the reader mixed emotions: it provokes laughter, but at the same time it chills. It is funny, but it is also embarrassing. It evokes feelings that people prefer to avoid, feelings that people don't want to be aware of, that they don't attach any importance to, or that they discount as exceptional and accidental. The reader wants to be entertained, and so he doesn't let himself be disturbed by excesses and oddities in the author's narrative. In this small episode, it is not simply death that chills, and not simply the execution, but the nonsensical nature of the death and the absurdity of the execution. What people want to be protected from, what they avoid, what they want to rid themselves of, is not last rites, or death, or sorrow, but rather absurdity. We can't orient ourselves properly in the absurd; we lose self-confidence; we are unable to see causal relations. This episode has, at the same time, another effect, exactly the opposite. It provokes laughter and merriment, and the emotions of mirth, humor and gaiety make themselves felt first. A man smiles and laughs, and suddenly, *suddenly* his laughter passes; his laugh freezes into a grimace and seems inappropriate to him. He was laughing, and within an instant he becomes aware that in fact nothing is funny. What provoked laughter and seemed to be funny is revealed—in the immediate flicker of time passing which we call suddenness—in a different light, and he feels ambushed by his own laughter. His own laughter embarrasses him. He turns inward, he withdraws into himself, he no longer attends to what is around him and in front of him but rather looks into himself: what was wrong? What did he do that was inappropriate? He laughed at something funny. But suddenly his laugh seems inappropriate, and his laughter suddenly begins to fade. Depressed and made uneasy by his own behavior, he looks for the fault in himself, not in the object that first provoked his laughter and then changed the laughter into chill. The analysis of this subjective feeling brings us close to the very essence of things: the phenomenon itself acts as a time bomb. What the phenomenon at first revealed about itself and what affected the man (the viewer, the reader, or the listener) is suddenly reversed and becomes its own antithesis. The laughter disappears and turns into chill and horror. The man turns away from the object and toward himself; how can he laugh about something that isn't funny but is instead strange, alien and even horrifying?

Is this terror and chill, this alienness and novelty a part of Hašek's work? And in what way is it a part? Is it only an episode, an exception, is it a marginal aspect, or is it more integrally related to the structure of his work? To this day, Hašek's Švejk is read (and discussed) in accordance with one particular interpretation. People accepted Švejk after the first world war, in the twenties and the thirties, as laughter over the horror experienced in the past and connected to a time that was never to return, and it is therefore taken as humorous rather than grotesque, and as satirical rather than tragic, it is idealized rather than dramatized. Joseph Lada quite congenially illustrated that aspect of Švejk's books, and his illustrations are, accordingly, humorous, with the satirical (and poetic) accompaniment of Švejk. That Hašek

however could have been, and was, read differently, is attested by the drawings of George Grosz: they are as one-sided as Lada's illustrations and they emphasize exactly those aspects of the work that the Czech illustrator Lada did not see: terror, horror, grotesqueness and grimace.

Under the prevailing, idealized interpretation, certain important passages in Švejk are forgotten: one of the funniest chapters in the book, describing a sermon of the drunken chaplain Katz in the prison chapel, begins with an account of a prison practice: "When somebody refuses orders we drag him off into solitary and there we break all his ribs and let him lie there until he croaks. We have the right to do that." In another sentence the atmosphere of the period is evoked: "A procession would pass, headed by a man under military escort with his hands manacled and followed by a cart with a coffin on it." The shackled man goes on foot because he is an outcast. *A thing,* the coffin, representing the majesty of the mechanism, *follows* the prisoner *on a cart.*

Does this mean, then, that black humor is interspersed in Hašek's work, that terror is set beside laughter, that jokes alternate with sorrow? The absurd manifests itself as terror and horror and as comedy and humor. Terror is not set *beside* laughter; rather, both spring from the same source: from the world of the grotesque.

In Hašek's work the grotesque world is manifested:

> *in the reactions* through which people exorcise terror, resist death, escape from boredom and struggle against absurdity;
>
> *in the magic of language* (epithets, obscenities, jokes, prayers) [the word is magical, and a strong word drowns out the weakness or weakening of the soul; joking dispels fear];
>
> *in the magic of the pose* [a pose is a mask or a pretense; a person takes the posture of a cynic because without cynicism—without the protection of a disguise—he will be destroyed by reality];
>
> *in the magic of play* [play kills time and creates for man a new, interesting world: "there was such contentment on the face of everyone that it seemed as if there wasn't any war and they weren't on a train that was carrying them to positions in great bloody battles and massacres but were, rather, seated behind a game table in some Prague coffeeshop"];
>
> *in the magic of action* [desperate, senseless, sudden action, which protects against terror or against death ("a soldier grabs the gate to a pigsty as protection against grenades")].

Who is it, really, who plays opposite Švejk? Is there only one such opposing player or are there more? This question is linked to other questions: what kind of structure does Hašek's work have? Only through the revealing of that structure can it be discovered who Švejk is.

The opening sentence of Hašek's work, "And so they've killed our Ferdinand," is not only the beginning of the narration but also announces a contemporaneous event which has started a certain progression. "Something" has been set in motion. This "something" is first called the Archduke Ferdinand; it later acts through the informer Brettschneider, then as the examining judge, and later in the novel as the chaplain Katz and the Lieutenant Dub. This "something" figures as the prison and the military order, as the "procession of bayonets with a man carrying chains walking before it and a wagon carrying a coffin following it," as the idiot-general and the general of latrine inspection, as the slow movement of the train toward the front, ending with "a soiled Austrian cap fluttering on a white cross." This "something" puts people into motion, and people carry out its commands and let themselves be led by it—to death. This "something" is hidden, anonymous, inaccessible, and sometimes appears in the guise of inspecting generals, who interpret for mortals the profound wisdom of the Great Mechanism: "Iron discipline . . . Organization . . . Scharmweise unter Kommando . . . Latrinenscheisen, dan partienweise . . . schlafen gehen."

Švejk without the mechanism is not Švejk, but only cheerful company, a joker, a fox. He becomes Švejk as soon as his true opposing player appears: the Great Mechanism. Whenever this mechanism goes into motion (as is announced in the first sentence, "And so they've killed our Ferdinand"), Hašek appears on the scene. The game begins between man and mechanism, mechanism and man. The mechanism adjusts the man to its own needs, modifies him according to its own logic, and forces him to adopt a certain behavior. The mechanism works as an anonymous force, organizing people into regiments, battalions, armies, and transporting them to the front. Iron discipline, organization, and order are as important symbols of the mechanism as chaos and senselessness.

Grotesqueness manifests itself as a mechanical Colossus and a human menagerie; or, to be more exact, the tragicomedy of reality, terror and ridiculousness, and horror and comedy, are continually revealed by individual representatives of the mechanism, who live either close to or in the masks of the animal world: the police informer Brettschneider was devoured by his own dogs; the chief physician regards all of the patients in the military hospital as "cattle and dung . . . ready for the rope;" a police suspect is investigated by "a gentleman with a cold, official face showing traces of bestial cruelty."

In addition to the movement of the mechanism, of absurdity and senselessness, there is still another movement, that of human destinies and human encounters,

human events and adventures, each having its own meaning and sense and together making up the content of human life. People move inside the Great Mechanism: the mechanical movement that leads people to destruction is in fact made possible and kept going by the mechanized movement of these same people. But some are always falling out of the machine; they get out of its reach, they escape, and they may even exist independently of the mechanism. In this complicated set of gears that fit together and move each other, only single, individual movements (destinies, encounters, events) make any sense, while the movement of the machine as a whole is senseless; the movement of the machine is the movement of absurdity. The discrepancy between the value of human destinies inside the machine and outside it, and the senselessness of the movement of the Great Mechanism as a whole, is so immense and explosive that this vision of the world by no means requires the central figure (Švejk) to develop according to the formula of the critics and an idealized interpretation: to view Švejk as a "positive" figure is to kill him. The two ongoing movements are impeded by a "retarding element," Švejk's narrative, which is always commenting in some way on both movements, and which reveals their relationship or relates them. In a number of places in Hašek's book, grotesqueness appears as an organic part, because it is present in the entire structure of the work.

4. Who is Švejk?

The figure of Švejk must be examined in a world context, but is not to be explained merely by references to the protagonists of Diderot, Cervantes, Rabelais or Coster.

Švejk is simple and shrewd, a lunatic and an idiot, an imbecile certified by the State and a rebel suspected by it, a malingerer and a calculator, a spy and a loyal subject. If Švejk appears as an idiot at certain times and at other times shrewd, if he acts as a servant at times and at other times as a rebel (while always remaining what he is), his changeability, elusiveness and "mystery" are consequences of the fact that he is part of a system which is based on the general premise that people pretend that they are what they are not: thus the crook and the controller (the inspector) are central figures in the system by necessity. One of the characteristics of the system is regular and mutual mystification. Švejk moves within a mechanism driven by indifference and sloppiness: people in it who take things seriously and literally, reveal the absurdity of the system and at the same time make themselves absurd and laughable. In this system the authorities are convinced that their subjects are swindlers, malingerers, troublemakers and traitors, while the people recognize behind the officiously solemn masks of their superiors the figures of bumblers and fools. It is a system in which masks, masking and unmasking function as fundamental relationships between people.

Who is Švejk? Hašek's analysis indicates that people are always being reduced to something. Švejk, however, is irreducible. Of key importance in this regard is the famous scene in the lunatic asylum, when the doctor turns to Švejk:

> "Take five paces forward and five to the rear." Švejk took ten. "But I told you to take five," said the doctor. "A few paces here or there don't matter to me," replied Švejk.

This is a key to understanding Švejk: people are always being placed in a rationalized and calculated system in which they are processed, disposed of, shoved around and moved, in which they are reduced to something not human and extra-human, that is to say to a calculable and disposable thing or quantity. But for Švejk a few paces here or there don't matter. Švejk is not calculable, because he is not predictable. A person cannot be reduced to a thing and is always more than a system of factual relationships in which he moves and by which he is moved.

Does Švejk assume the mask of an idiot, thus hiding the face of an ideal humanity and nobleness of spirit? Does he wear the mask of a loyal soldier in order to conceal his own true face, the face of a revolutionary? Hašek's genius lies in showing man and his own hero as having great breadth, as spanning the extremes of imbecility and shrewdness, of cynicism, magnamity and sensitivity, of loyalty to the state and rebellion against it.

In Hašek's work people meet in train stations, brothels, taverns, hospitals and even in the lunatic asylum. And for Švejk, the asylum is in fact the only place in the world where people are free. The problem is, in what sense are they free? Does this mean that in order to be free, you have to go crazy, or that one is mad if one is free? Is the asylum a refuge for freedom, or must freedom be locked up in a madhouse so that it won't hurt people and won't get hurt by them either?

The complexity, the enigmatic quality and the mysteriousness of Kafka's work are not to be contrasted with qualities of trivial simplicity or intelligibility ascribed to the work of Hašek. In its own way Hašek's work is equally mysterious and full of puzzles, and must also be interpreted by means of modern scholarly analysis. The patriarchal, conservative theory of "popular appeal" fails entirely in this regard.

5. Hašek and Kafka

Švejk cannot be identified with Švejkism, just as Kafka cannot be identified as Kafkaesque. What is the Kafkaesque world? It is the world of absurd human thought and absurd behavior and absurd human dreams. It is a world that is a horrible and senseless labyrinth, a world of powerless people caught in the net of bureaucratic machinery and material gadgets: a world in which man is powerless in a gadget-oriented, alienated reality. Švejkism is one way of reacting in this world of the absurd omnipotence of machines and of materially motivated relationships. Švejkism and the Kafkaesque are univeral phenomena that exist independently of the work of Jaroslav Hašek and Franz Kafka; the two Prague writers merely gave names for these phenomena, and their works gave them a certain form. That does not mean that Hašek's work can be reduced to Švejkism or that Kafka's work can be reduced to the Kafkaesque. Švejk is not Švejkism, just as Kafka's work is not Kafkaesque. Hašek's Švejk is also an implicit criticism of Švejkism, just as Kafka's work is a criticism of the Kafkaesque. Hašek and Kafka describe and expose the worlds of Švejkism and the Kafkaesque as universal phenomena, and at the same time subject them to criticism. Kafka's man is walled into a labyrinth of petrified possibilities, alienated relationships and the materialism of daily life, all these growing to supernatural and phantasmagoric dimensions, while he constantly and with unrelenting passion searches for the truth. Kafka's man is condemned to live in a world in which the only human dignity is confined to the interpretation of that world; while other forces, beyond the control of any individual, determine the course of the world's development and change. And Hašek, through his own work, shows that man, even when treated as an object, is still man, and that man not only has been turned into an object but has become a producer of objects as well. Man transcends his own status as an object; he is not reducible to an object, and he is more than a system. We do not yet have a suitable description for the miraculous fact that man harbors within himself the enormous and indestructible force of humanity.

In the first half of the twentieth century these two Prague authors offered two visions of the modern world. They described two human types, which at first glance seem far apart and contradictory, but which in reality complement each other. While Kafka depicted the materialism of our day-to-day human world and showed that modern man must live through and become familiar with the basic forms of alienation in order to be human, Hašek showed that man transcends materialism, because he is not reducible to an object, or to material products of relationships.

Note

1. Facelessness and anonymity appear in countless forms. W. Emrich characterizes the high official Klamm in *The Castle* as "a force controlling all human relationships." It is indeed remarkable that an important fact, obvious to Czech readers, has escaped western critics: that Kafka's bureaucrat Klamm is intrinsically tied to the Czech word "klam," meaning enigma, ambiguity, delusion and deception.

Václav Bělohradský (essay date 1983)

SOURCE: Bělohradský, Václav. "The Retreat into the Uniform and the Disintegration of Order: Švejk as an Integral Part of Central European Literature."[1] *Scottish Slavonic Review,* no. 2 (1983): 21-40.

[*In the following essay, Bělohradský refutes what he calls "the domesticating tendency" in modern assessments of* The Good Soldier Schweik *that describe the novel's namesake protagonist as "a 'Czech folk story teller,'" contending instead that Schweik's character "is deeply alien" to the Czech folk tradition and that Hašek's story is "anchored" to the themes and motifs of Central European literature and culture.*]

I. Central-European Civilisation (an Attempt at a Definition)

The great success of Jaroslav Hašek's ***Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války*** (***The Good Soldier Švejk [Schweik] and his Fortunes in the World War***) with the average reader has obscured the uniqueness of the book within the Czech literary tradition and its foreignness to all that Czech literature stood for before 1914. The domestication of *Švejk* produced notorious labels like 'a simple, ordinary man from the folk, in whose direct unpretentiousness the author finds a welcome contrast to the attitudes of the ruling classes' and 'a popular humorist, a representative of the indestructible folk Czechness'; in his genial smile the nation survives, waiting for better times, etc. etc. This interpretation was considerably enhanced and strengthened by the famous illustrations by Josef Lada, which totally exclude all interpretations of ***Švejk*** [***The Good Soldier Švejk and his Fortunes in the World War***], other than those just quoted. Jindřich Toman[2] has shown in his stylistic analysis that ***Švejk*** is in fact much less 'folk-inspired' (*lidový*) than might appear to be the case.

Hašek's novel, with its sophisticated overall construction, is stylistically akin to the European Avant-garde. The actor and comedian Jiří Voskovec[3] recalls that at

his first encounter, ***Švejk*** had struck him as something stunningly modern, in a world still ruled by pompous and parochial officialdom. For him, it was a product of an inherently European attitude, mocking the anachronistic, ostentatious and smug world of officials, nationalistic 'patriots' and all the other bombastic purveyors of empty talk.

> And to bring the unforgettable festival of fun of the early 1920s in Czechoslovakia to its climax, Jaroslav Hašek created his ***Good Soldier Švejk*** [***The Good Soldier Švejk and his Fortunes in the World War***]. The first instalments of this work, which, apart from Čapek's word *robot,* has to date been the only Czech contribution to world literature, stunned both myself and my fellow-comedian Jan Werich. . . . After our revolutionary discovery of Chaplin and Co., alongside the impact of Dixieland Jazz, Jaroslav Hašek became yet another powerful source of our humour. Švejk, a modern St. George, the hero of the saga of a single brain's triumph over the Hydra of the Establishment, the Regime, the System—Reason, disguised as Stupidity, in a struggle against the Absurd pretending to be Wise and Dignified—the sense of Nonsense in its struggle against the nonsense of Sense—all this is the quintessence of comedy, the nuclear energy of fun.[4]

The world that loomed behind ***Švejk***—one which, in Voskovec's view, had just tripped over its own long beard—comprised not only Austrian military uniforms, officials, *Herren Kollegen* with blackened bald patches under their thinning hair, but also Czech national costumes, patriotic dances and nationalistic rhetoric. These mutually hostile worlds struck Voskovec, for all their differences and feuding, as basically identical: the inanity of the nationalistic songs was in a way the same in the Austrian and the Czech camps. Of course, it was still possible to distinguish the victims from their tormentors; yet they were intimately inter-related by their vocabulary, their modes of thought and their shared obsessions. Hašek broke the narrow confines of their quarrels and thus set his work in a totally new context.

Švejk is a part of that European literature whose modernity lies in its having shed light on the deep and intrinsic relationships between all those feuding languages, customs and viewpoints that co-existed within one epoch. I emphasise this point in order to bring out the modernity of Hašek's work *vis-à-vis* the Czech literary tradition and, at the same time, its total unrelatedness to the Czech folk tradition. None of Švejk's anecdotes is folk-like: all of them are instances of a complicated, destructive attitude, which has nothing whatever in common with the folk tradition. The Czech folk tradition is baroque: Švejk's amorality is deeply alien to it. Erazim Kohák[5] reiterates the moralist's misunderstanding of ***Švejk*** when he wonders how such a shocking type could have become a major Symbol. The moral sense of the Czech folk tradition is completely alien to Švejk's 'modern sense of fun', as Voskovec puts it.

Let us look for the cultural background of Švejk's universality and for the sociological sources of his modernity: it is high time that the domesticating tendency, which aims to confine Švejk to the cliché of a 'Czech folk story teller', was refuted.

Švejk is universal, because it is anchored in the culture and civilisation of Central Europe. The unity of that civilisation has been obscured by the political division of that part of the world. But this division cannot alter the fact that ***Švejk*** belongs, not to 'Slavonic literatures', but to the same city as Franz Kafka, to the same area as Robert Musil. It is surely significant that the Czech writer Milan Kundera, living in Paris, emphasises that he is a Central-European, as against the East-European identity that is being forced upon him. However, what is even more important is that whatever universal validity Czech literature possesses, it does so because it is fundamentally Central-European.

How is the expression 'Central-European civilisation' to be understood?

We can use the standard definition of *civilisation* as a set of cultural models of social behaviour which make up an environment shared by two or more societies. Such an environment includes a common language or the commonly accepted use of several languages, the use of the same basic technology, the same laws and rules of decision-making, the same type of public opinion, the same everydayness, and a certain degree of religious and ideological unity. As against that, the word *culture* is used to denote the models of behaviour limited to a single social structure. A civilisation originates from certain elements of a particular culture spreading beyond the confines of their original social structure. In this sense, we can speak of a Christian civilisation, a Catholic, democratic or, conceivably, a rationalist civilisation. Our contemporary civilisation is technological, because technology is that element of western culture which is transmitted to all other cultures and social structures. Discovering a civilisation entails identifying the element of a culture most capable of becoming 'universalised', i.e. of becoming an element that unifies a number of societies, thereby creating a commonly shared environment.

Central-European civilisation can be defined as 'supra-legalistic', in the sense that officials, a legal code, an *apparat,* a central system of weights and measures, uniforms, rubber-stamps, offices, state salaries and careers are the only universal factors around which, and through which, Central-European unity and its ethos originated. This multi-national territory was never unified by language, history, a common culture or by religion: only the impersonality of laws and the precision of weights and measures imprinted a unity upon the Austrian State. According to H.G. Gadamer,[6] understanding a culture

as a tradition requires identifying the question which that culture is constantly trying to answer and which it feels to be 'its intrinsic part'. Central-European civilisation is trying to answer the question: can a Legal Code, in its general sense of an impersonal precision, be the source of a universality? Is there not something nihilistic in this universal retreat to the Law and into the Uniform? To what extent is it permissible to dissociate oneself from what 'differs from the Law' and from what is not precisely measurable?

More theoretically, we could speak of a permanent absence of legitimacy that pervades the whole Central-European area. There have been attempts to overcome this absence of legitimacy by constructing a perfectly impersonal, neutral legal code. This Legal Code is presumed to be the source of legitimacy, indeed, to stand in for it. Thus there emerges a classic ideology, whose aim is to rationalise society by means of the State: to overcome the absence of legitimacy by constructing a system of perfect organisational *apparats,* whose neutrality and impartial precision could be shared by all, regardless of their individual differences.

However, when the impersonal legal code assumes such a legitimising function, it becomes grotesque. A State that regulates and runs Society becomes overburdened, and the limits of the state rationality soon become obvious. Over and over again, natural energy keeps emerging from beneath the impersonal legal code which, while impossible to classify rationally, is nevertheless both appealing and seductive. Beyond the overburdened Law, we can clearly see those things that 'differ from the Law', things that seemingly *can* be put into a uniform, *can* be neutralised and contained: yet a pyjama will always show even from under the tightest uniform; even in the most thoroughly mapped-out environment something will always be there to defy all attempts at rationalising it.

The First World War stunned people precisely because it showed the fragility of Reason, of the centralised system of weights and measures and the impersonal Law. Voskovec saw the laughter of his generation as being provoked by the contrast between the pomposity of

> the statuesque splendour of the Tsars, Kaisers, Archdukes, bowler-hatted statesmen on the one hand, and the convulsed, ashen-pale, emaciated faces of rank-and-file soldiers in faded uniforms[7]

on the other. The world's 'historical landscape', that pompous pretentiousness which turned the starvation of the soldiers and the mud of the battlefield into 'rational and noble historic victories'—all this suddenly collapsed. Voskovec's contrast highlights the disintegration of the whole legalistic and rational interpretation of order and history, based as it is on the need to increase rational impersonality, whose classic incarnation is the State. The First World War brought about the fall of the dignity of impersonal Reason, which had aimed to achieve a level of perfection that would make it fully independent of everything personal and 'different from the Legal Code'.

Central-European culture also became aware of the potential barbarity and inhumanity of this impersonal, State-oriented rationality and its depersonalising 'historical props', which obscure the real meaning of one's actions and one's personal responsibility for them, stylising violence, cruelty and murder into an 'Historical Necessity'. The mass crimes that have shaken the values of this century were the product more of an 'infection-by-geometry' in the devastated landscape of the State than of an explosion of some primitive instincts within civilised Man: these crimes were, first and foremost, the product of a *civilisation.* Musil regards the idea of order as inherently related to death: a perfect order is a cold death, a devastated moonscape, an infection-by-geometry.

An understanding for things 'different from the Law' is typically Central-European. It is a unifying factor in Central-European philosophy, science and literature. It is a feeling for the absurdity of attempts to restrict life to a single, unified and impersonal state rationality, which would have life flow along pre-determined lines, freed from all dirty linen and personal prejudice. This is where the Central-European grotesque has its source: Kafka, Hašek, Kundera. The human body, the feminine principle, childhood, the Slavonic languages of the Empire, its mysterious provinces, its multi-nationality—all these are things controlled by the irreducible ambiguity of life, which destroys state rationality; yet these things at the same time release in all of us something fundamentally positive, attractive, maternal, immeasurable and comforting. To shield ourselves from this comforting ambiguity, we don a uniform and retreat to the Law. But our private, individual lives keep re-surfacing as something dangerously attractive, as an obsession, a nocturnal aspect of the life of the proper civil servant.

All Central-European culture describes this basic fundamental movement: a regression from the Uniform back to Life. Central Europe, as a forepost of the Western World, experienced earlier than the rest of that world the grotesqueness of the legal code that aims to assume overall legitimacy and become the centre of every human, personal existence.

The detachment from the elemental positiveness of life and its natural world (*Lebenswelt*) is the paramount feature of the rationalist establishment of today, and turns this establishment into a grotesque construct. Central-European culture has anticipated the universal devastation, which is in danger of taking place through the Re-

treat into the Uniform, to the ultimate, perfect, unambiguous Language and to Science. It anticipated a crisis of western aspirations which aim to achieve a universally legitimised existence; a *modus vivendi*, which is seen as the fulfilment of Western Man's historic task. Rationality that has recourse to impersonality as its normative base necessarily leads to a neutralisation of all values and of personal consciousness: it transforms each human community into a depersonalised mass, transforms culture into ideology and hastens the advent of the Totalitarian State. Nobody, perhaps only an animal, can be that impersonal, says Musil.[8]

II. The Uniform, Science, Incompleteness: The Three Themes of Central-European Literature

The basic pattern of modern Central-European philosophy—and of the Central-European Tale [a 'tale', that is to say, narrative fiction based on personal and essentially non-communicable experience of the traumatic events of the twentieth century; *J.Č.*]—evolves around the following three key themes: (a) an illusory Retreat into the Uniform, i.e. to its ability to control and mask the irrational aspects of life (Hermann Broch,[9] Joseph Roth,[10] Hašek); (b) the alienation of Science from Life, the insurmountable presence of the 'mystical' in man's language and actions, a critique of objectivism (Edmund Husserl, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Broch, Musil); (c) the essential incompleteness of Central-European philosophy and of the typical Central-European Tale, their 'non-finiteness', i.e. the impossibility of finding a culmination for them in a 'finale' of some kind (Husserl, Wittgenstein, Kafka, Hašek, Musil, Italo Svevo[11]).

(A)

In Central-European literature the Uniform symbolises the inevitable logical conclusion of West-European metaphysics, which has taken Man out of the mutable world of the senses and has based any meaningful human existence on the perception of 'Truth' or of an 'Idea'. Whatever is real, wears a uniform: a uniform is the true God of metaphysics. Only in a uniform does human life achieve the dignity of an idea. By means of a uniform it is possible to escape from the fragility and fuzziness of life to a world of permanent meanings and facts. The Uniform guards us from being attracted by the things that 'differ from the Law', things that are merely inconstant reflections of the 'Idea'. The Uniform embodies what European objectivism strives for. One of the central metaphors of Husserl's language is constructed on this basis:

> An ideological cloak of 'mathematics' and 'mathematical natural sciences', or a cloak of symbols, of symbolic mathematical theories, *covers* all those things that, for the scientists and the educated, replace the 'objectively true and genuine' natural world.
>
> The ideological cloak causes us to regard as *true existence* what is merely a *method*; the ideological disguise is the cause of our failure to grasp *the real meaning of the Method.*[12]

The Uniform lies on the borderline of 'Reality', of the precise world of Reason which separates us from Chaos.

> Anselm Eibenschütz, our inspector, was . . . a former soldier. . . . He would never have left the army had his wife not forced him to. And he was very sorry having to leave his uniform behind. . . . He did not like civilian clothes, and he felt like a snail forced to leave the shell it had been building from its own saliva, its own flesh and blood, for a quarter of a snail's natural life. . . . He took off his uniform, his beloved uniform, and left the barracks, his beloved barracks. He ought to have remained in the barracks. Among the soldiers, his whole life was governed by rules. There, there were no informers or anonymous letters. The responsibility for what each soldier was doing lay way above them, in a territory unknown to them. How easy and free was the life in the barracks! He felt deserted now, without a fatherland, a stranger in those unfamiliar civilian clothes after his twelve years in a rifleman's uniform.[13]

Roth's inspector is conscientious, but on the frontier of the Empire, office-holders must face deep loneliness: here the 'representatives of the weights and measures, the Law and the State were regarded as enemies'. It is easy to be on the side of the weights and measures when you're in your uniform, shielded from people's judgements, from their eyes. In civilian clothes, life comes too close for comfort. The hero starts realising that it is probably absurd to check weights and measures. His whole life and career slowly disintegrate and he is finally murdered in a smugglers' inn on the Russian frontier. Here he had found the only passion of his life, a gypsy woman, from whom he learnt 'what he was about, and this recognition stunned him'. As he lies dying, he dreams that he is no longer an Inspector of Weights and Measures, but a tradesman and all his weights and measures are false. And lo and behold, the Supreme Inspector enters, examines them and then says, surprised: 'All your weights and measures are false, and yet they are correct.' Without that uniform, Order is at the mercy of gypsies, dreams, and unmeasurable, meaningful, though unscientific, language. Broch describes the metaphysical anxiety which seizes the young officer von Pasenow as he catches glimpses of the nocturnal origin of life.

> . . . a proper uniform makes it possible to separate our person from the outside world; it is like a hard casing with which the world and the person may constantly collide, yet they remain strictly separated. The real function of the uniform is to display disciplined order and to introduce it into the world, to eliminate the uncertain and clouded current of life, and to cover up all the soft and imprecise things on the human body, its underwear, its skin . . . The man who in the morning

> buttons up his uniform has, in fact, acquired a second skin, a stronger skin, and he begins to forget his underwear, the uncertainty of life; indeed, life itself recedes into the distance. . . .[14]

Von Pasenow is frequently seized with the horror that he might 'slip out of the uniform' into the clammy, mutable matter of life. He feels revulsion at any contamination of the uniform by the body, wrapped in underwear, and he despises married officers.

The whole of ***Švejk*** is an account of someone becoming a [narrow-minded] idiot (*zblbnutí*), a process generated by the uniform, giving its wearers the impression that they are 'the vital persons', whereas all the others are 'merely chance persons'. And the chain of war can remain unbroken only because every man is dispensable to the uniform: he enters it, dies in it, and another man replaces him in it.

> "They bury the soldiers naked," said another soldier, "they put another person in that uniform and we start all over again."
>
> "Until we win the war," remarked Švejk.[15]

Švejk's facetious donning of a Russian uniform which a Russian prisoner-of-war had left on the bank of a pond, also belongs to that category. The uniform charges us to 'show the utmost spiritual indifference', to fill one's stomach and 'not to worry about things'.

Kundera analyses 'verbal uniforms', that is, defensive constructs designed to shield us from inconstant reality. An ideology is a set of such verbal uniforms, it is the need to wear a mask, which is a feature of growing up. Lyricism is for Kundera an example of such an artificial world, from which any element of resistance or difference has been excluded: hence the relation between poetry and the police. Lyricism is a uniform in the sense that it safeguards us from the inconstant matter of the world.

> Man, expelled from the safe enclosure of childhood, desires to enter the world, but because he is at the same time afraid of it, he creates an artificial, *substitute* world out of his own verses. He lets his poems circle around him as though they were planets circling around the sun; he becomes the centre of a small universe, in which there is nothing alien, in which he feels at home like a baby inside its mother, because everything in this universe was created from a single piece of raw material—his soul. Here he can accomplish all those things so difficult to accomplish in the external world; he can, like the student Wolker[16], march into the Revolution along with crowds of proletarians and, like the virgin Rimbaud, whip little girls; but those crowds and, indeed, those little girls—his 'girlfriends'—are made not from the inimical material of an alien world, but from the raw material of his own dreams; they are therefore him himself and do not disturb the unity of the universe he has constructed.[17]

Political, patriotic and legal speeches belong among the stylistically and thematically totally different[18] fragments which function in ***Švejk*** as a source of nonsense. Thus, for instance, the speech of the young army doctor who prompts the malingerers to

> fertilise the vast fields of fame of the Empire with your blood, thus victoriously accomplishing the task given to you by History, to dash forward in your heroic courage, with no regard for your lives,

upon which the senior army doctor comments: 'Whether you talk to them in angelic or devilish tongues, it's all to the same effect. They are just a rabble.' The unforgettable sermon by Curate Ibl, the example of bravery shown by the driver Bong, the speech of the drunken lieutenant Dub—all these are instances of 'verbal uniforms', whose essential absurdity is brought out by Švejk's attempts to take them totally seriously.

Hašek's political speeches as a candidate of his [facetious] Party of Moderate Progress within the Confines of the Law (Strana mírného pokroku v mezích zákona) are among the finest specimens of this kind of language.

> "Voters! Now that I am about to deliver my first speech as a candidate, my sight unwittingly roams to the past, when Christopher Columbus . . . was preparing to set sail from Spain across the sea, to discover America. At that point, standing on board his three ships, he said, just before the anchor was raised: 'America will not be discovered by empty clichés and speeches.'"[19]
>
> ([***Dějiny strany mírného pokroku v mezích zákona***])

Lieutenant Lukáš, Švejk's superior, understood such an analysis of the verbal uniform only too well as, after listening to the Good Soldier for a while, he thought: 'My God, I myself often talk the same rubbish—the difference is only the form in which I present it.'

To sum up: the uniform in Central-European culture represents a symbol of the search for one's own inevitability amongst merely coincidental things and beings, a symbol of the construction of an order, impenetrable by mutable experience and by the flow of life. The uniform is the symbolic logical conclusion of the European concept of truth seen as impersonality, an abstraction divorced from real life.

(B)

The second key theme of Central-European literature and philosophy is the grotesqueness of attempts to restrict the subjective meaning of life within an unambiguously defined scientific language. Viennese neopositivism (and especially its later American, optimistic, version) is an example of absurd attempts to reduce the problems of individual human existence to a question of the right *method*: once we have renounced the inex-

pressible that keeps cropping up in language and have isolated it as a 'mistake' or as a linguistic illusion, an age of world unity and peace will begin, an era of happiness for mankind. Such a philosophical programme parallels attempts of the State to reduce *essence* to *function* (a person's identity is determined by his social role) and legitimacy (legitimate is what a specialised *apparat* authoritatively defines as the Law). The absurdity of this illusion has been described by Husserl, Wittgenstein, Sigmund Freud, Karl Kraus,[20] Kafka, Elias Canetti,[21] Broch. This theme is the common denominator of the entire Central-European culture. Kafka's 'Logic may be undeniable, but it will succumb to Man who wants to live'[22] points to the nature of this absurdity. Reason is an instrument of life, and any attempts to invert this relationship result in a paradox. The attempt to reduce legitimacy to pure legality results in all impure, i.e. specifically human, elements—love, hatred, ethical values, beliefs, subjective opinions, etc.—being excluded from human activity. Thus, however, Reason is transformed into a police interpretation of the world. Wittgenstein, the inspirer—despite himself—of the Vienna Circle, never shared the illusion that the immeasurable can be measured and the incalculable calculated by projecting scientific norms into philosophy and into culture as a whole. He never saw Science as a source of Sense. Wittgenstein defined the rules which a meaningful language must obey (experience-content or tautology), but at the same time he realised the fundamental uselessness of this discipline as the solution of 'life problems'. There are totally meaningless sentences which we nevertheless understand one way or another and which are more meaningful for us than any scientific theory can ever be.

> We feel that even if *all conceivable* scientific questions were to be answered, our life problems would still not even be touched by that. Certainly, there would be no more questions, and precisely in this lies the answer. The solution of the problem of life is in its disappearance. (Is this not why people to whom the meaning of life has become clear, after much doubt, have been unable to say what the meaning of life was?)
>
> The inexpressible really does exist. This *shows* itself, it is 'the mystical'.[23]

Kraus said shortly before Wittgenstein that 'Science does not span the chasms of thinking, it simply stands before them like a warning sign, and those who ignore it, do so at their own risk'.[24] In Kafka's diary we find a very Wittgensteinian thought: 'only those questions can be answered to which we already know the answers as we ask the question'.[25] Similarly, Freud says that 'logical argument fails *vis-à-vis* emotional interests' and draws all his conclusions from this.

Understanding Science as a source of meaning in human life is to believe in the omnipotence of the Method. The Method brings ever larger regions of the world within our grasp: things can be measured and manufactured, geometrical figures can be reproduced precisely, truth can be re-instated. In this sense, an ever greater part of our lives fully depends on our arbitrary will: everything that surrounds us may be methodologically manipulated and our emotions or viewpoints may be methodologically proved or disproved. However, the question arises whether all this power over ourselves and the world is in a fundamental relationship, not to what we are because of our arbitrary will, but to what we are historically, because of our finiteness; a fundamental relationship to what we could call 'the natural order of our existence', which ante-dates any method.

Neo-positivist optimism alleges that it is possible methodologically to map out the areas of meaningfulness in language and to eliminate all statements which do not fall within the scientific norm of meaningfulness. However, such a view is absurd, because genuine language is not 'pre-determined', it has its roots in the natural world, whose natural meaningfulness exists prior to any methodological construct. Language is genuine only as long as it exposes us to the strength of what transcends us. Methodology is 'lyrical', in Kundera's sense. Methodologically organised persuasion is not a genuine language simply because its meaning has been predetermined. What matters is to try to capture the extra-methodological experience of truth: it is only from this that 'meaning' enters our lives.

Modern violence is connected with this application of the Method. The intellectuals want to become the enlightened avant-garde of mankind and methodologically to create a 'new man', to achieve the 'final solution to social problems'. Broch sees the source of *Kitsch* in the methodological application of art: *Kitsch* originates from the efforts to achieve maximum effect, i.e. from one's methodological approach to art. A poem is *Kitsch* if it merely aims to make the reader cry or laugh and methodically organises language to achieve this aim. Modern cruelty is a lyrical cruelty, which stems from the desire to set up a world where all meaning originates from our arbitrary will.

Art, philosophy and genuine thought enquire into the relationship between what an effective method has made fully dependent on our arbitrary will and what constitutes the natural world, the order of our finite existence, what 'happens', experiences that we cannot arbitrarily 're-wind' and 're-play' like some mechanical recording. There is a natural flow of life from which all our language and actions acquire their meaning: but our experience of this meaning is extra-methodological.

Husserl and Jan Patočka[26] turned this question into a fundamental theme of contemporary philosophy: this theme of meaning (which ante-dates any method and is therefore generally binding) also recurs in the question of natural human rights.

Thus it is clear that the meaningfulness of scientific language is limited by the fact that Science disregards exclusively personal things, our own 'Private Tales', our finiteness. On the other hand, the language of art and philosophy is an attempt to provide a language for things that have never happened before and will not happen again - finite, personal, unique things, which are intelligible to other people, although they are not intelligible in a replicated (i.e. methodological) way.

Central-European culture sees the prevalence of methodology and *Kitsch* within a social structure as leading to the ascendancy of the masses in Society. Impersonality and methodology transform a human being into a part of an amorphous mass, because an individual is always rooted in his own life-tale, which can be understood by others only as long as they, too, have their own life-tales. The masses do not understand anything, because they are 'outside' genuine history, without their own individual tales. It is only individual, unique life-tales that can be communicated from person to person and be shared by them.

Science as a source of Nonsense is a profoundly Central-European theme. What is at stake is the preservation in Man of his sensitivity to the extra-methodological experience of truth, to the truth present only in tales. Modern history is a state-controlled discipline in which killing is explained away methodologically. Marxism is a Science in this sense, the Science of 'Historical Necessity'. The Science of History functions here as a theatrical setting, against which our lives acquire a methodological meaning. Central-European culture rebels against this scientific and theatrical setting. ***Švejk*** is permeated with this spirit of rebellion. Švejk's experience of truth defies methodological pigeon-holing. He is a non-Historic character. His stories run counter to 'Historical Necessity'.

Švejk in the hands of the forensic experts and subjected to psychiatric investigations, the endless zoological and historiographical variations by Hašek, the frequent conjuring up of the linguistic and stylistic atmosphere of a scientific, specialised language—this is part and parcel of the fundamental critique of methodology. The military methodology of Cadet Biegler (*Was schadet dem Magen im Kriege*), the deciphering of secret messages, the victory plans as set out in the chronicle kept by the volunteer Marek, the classical languages in Hašek's short stories - all these illustrate that disrespect for Science as a source of meaning so characteristic of Central-European literature.

(c)

The third unifying feature of Central-European culture is its rejection of the idea of the Finale, the Conclusion. The incompleteness of all important works of Central-European literature and philosophy is the product of their structure and not of the coincidental circumstances of their authors. This incompleteness is directly related to the critique of European metaphysics, i.e. the critique of any definitive hierarchy of values and facts. The idea of an ending is predicated on the existence of a set of hierarchically arranged values which were laid down once and for all. In such a setting, the non-recognition of, for instance, any higher values, is a *tragic* conclusion. Only in such a setting is it possible to devise a finale for a Tale. It may be tragic or comic, but it will always take place against the backdrop of the hierarchy, of a permanent validity. However, how should one conclude a story which takes place outside the hierarchy of values? or, rather, how does one conclude a story, whose central theme is the disintegration of this hierarchy of values?

It should be recalled that Musil wrote a dissertation on Ernst Mach[27] and that even the name of his novel, *A Man without Qualities,* is connected with the critique of metaphysics. This critique leads to a radical rejection of the idea of the Finale, of the completed form in Central-European literature. A word can never definitively prove its meaning (Broch): we can find the same theme in Wittgenstein's definition of philosophy as a discipline which cannot say anything about the world, but clarifies those things in language which enable us to say something about that world. Philosophical knowledge is pushed away at the end like a ladder that we used for climbing up, but can now be of no more use. Musil's *A Man without Qualities* cannot have an ending, because it keeps disintegrating into ever new stories, and the knowledge it presents is always only as valid as the story from which further stories keep emerging. ***The Good Soldier Švejk*** cannot have an ending, Švejk cannot win the war, his stories and the knowledge he presents are without a finale. A finale in Kafka's novels would be just as unthinkable. In Kundera, the only viable finale is a 'joke', in which the validity of the story that has just taken place is shown as completely fortuitous, non-permanent. Endowing the story with some sort of permanence would amount to placing it in a kind of hierarchy and returning it to the realm of metaphysics. The ultimate conclusion of Wittgenstein's philosophy is silence: one has to keep silent about things that nothing can be said about. In the second part of his work Wittgenstein shows that the meaning of words is always transitory and is based on linguistic play, and that there is no essence of things to which definitive meanings of words would point. In the actions of people that have 'slipped out of their his torical settings', have lost their permanent validity, their 'scientific aura', Kundera sees the territory of the grotesque at its most typical. ('O Bohemia, where the glory of the gunshots turns so frequently into the fun of kicks on the backside!')[28]

The true reality of our actions lies in our 'being abandoned by History'. Only out of this historic 'loneliness' may a Tale be born.

> A shot ricocheted, Jaromil clutched at his chest and Lermontov fell onto the frozen concrete of the balcony. He is in the gala uniform of a tsarist officer and he is now raising himself from the floor. He is disastrously alone. There is no literary historiography here with its soothing balm which would give a noble meaning to his fall. There is no pistol to put an end to his boyish degradation. There is only laughter coming through the closed window to disgrace him eternally. He goes to the railings and looks down. But alas, the balcony is not high enough for him to be sure that he would be killed if he jumped. . . . He is caught in a trap. He is caught in the trap of a farce. Lermontov is not afraid of death, but he is afraid of being ridiculous—an unsuccessful suicide is funny. (But how come, how is this possible? . . . After all, whether or not a suicide is successful, it is still the same deed, with the same motivation and the same courage! What then is it that distinguishes the tragic from the ridiculous? Just the fortuity of success? What is it that distinguishes smallness from greatness? Tell us, Lermontov! Is it just the props? The gun or the kick on your backside? Only the theatrical scenery which History has foisted upon a human story?)[29]

Ludvík's revenge in Kundera's *The Joke,* or the suicide of Zemánek's ex-wife, which is degraded into a bout of diarrhoea, are equally abandoned by History. There is the same mechanism of a lapse from the Historical Scenario in the *Farewell Party* and in the book of short stories *Laughable Loves* (e.g. *Nobody Will Laugh*).

This abandonment of human actions by History, the collapse of the theatrical props, by means of which a crowd of 'howling men, with their trousers full, in the heat of enemy fire' might be turned into Warriors and Historic Heroes, is the dominant theme of ***Švejk.*** Historic and scientific props survive in ***Švejk*** merely in the heroism, manufactured to meet official demand, in sermons, officers' speeches, and in the battle-plans which end up as toilet paper, like the one so used by Officer-Cadet Biegler. Once our personal stories have been abandoned by History and Science, they cannot reach a finale: any permanent validity presupposes theatrical props.

The western concept of History is metaphysics projected into time: it is a search for a definitive order of events, things, statements, a search for a definitive, final solution. It is an expression of the desire for a 'grand finale'. But a finale in a story is metaphysics-turned-narrative. A tale with a conclusion inevitably takes place against the backdrop of an ordered Cosmos, where a kick on the backside does differ from a gunshot and where at the end of the narrative a virtue can cover itself in glory. God, the Devil, the Tsar, truth, good, love, matrimony, progress, the people, Stalin, the Revolution, the brethren and the comrades, socialism—these are all elements of metaphysics projected into time: it is from these theatrical props that tales take on their definitiveness. For the Central-European intellectual all finales are equally viable: a finale belongs not to life, but to merely external props and to a metaphysical strait-jacket.

It should be recalled that Nikolai Gogol added a 'finale' to *The Government Inspector,* in which a real (i.e. the Tsar's) inspector appears on the stage and sorts everything out, with the result that Tsar Nikolai I could come to the première and not feel offended: he, the Living Finale.

All important works of Central-European literature are thus inherently unfinished—Kafka, Hašek, Broch, Musil, Wittgenstein, Husserl, Kraus: all these authors fail to bring their stories and ideas to a final, permanent form, because by so doing they would put them back into Uniforms, into Science and the décor of permanent validity, whose collapse they portray so graphically.

This, then, is the real cultural context of ***Švejk.*** What it derives its universality from is its Central-Europeanness. Kundera has remarked that the small nations of Central Europe do not make history, they are its victims: hence their intimate familiarity with the idea of annihilation. The collapse of the historical props, this loss of control over history is, of course, the archetypal situation in modern times everywhere. Or are there still nations 'big' enough to be able to remain in control over history? It is in its comprehension of the disintegration of order, History, of the props of 'higher' Reason, of all permanent validities, that Central-European culture is in advance of the cultures of the so-called 'big nations'. In this lie the roots of its universality.

Notes

1. This is an edited translation of the Czech original, 'Útěk k uniformě a pád pořádku: Švejk jako součást středoevropské literatury', published in *Proměny,* No. 2/1981, pp. 33-46. It was abridged and translated by Jan Čulík and Peter Henry.
2. Jindřich Toman, 'Futurismus, dadaismus nebo poetismus? Poznámký o Švejkovi'; *ibid,* pp. 26-32.
3. Jiří Voskovec (1905-1981), a member of the Czechoslovak inter-war Avant-garde, playwright, actor, theatrical director, translator and poet and one-half of the famous Czech comic duo of Voskovec and Werich (V&W). In the 1920s and 1930s, together with Jan Werich (1905-1980), he wrote and staged a number of successful avant-garde comedy shows in Prague, the later of which were openly anti-fascist. V&W spent the Second World War in the United States; Voskovec returned to the USA in 1951, working as an actor until his death in 1981.

4. Jiří Voskovec, *Klobouk ve křoví,* Prague, 1965, p. 29.
5. Erazim Kohák (b. 1933), Czech philosopher living in the United States, professor of philosophy at Boston University, specialising in phenomenology (Husserl, Patočka) and Masaryk's social philosophy. Among his works are *Idea and Experience* (Chicago-London, 1978); has also published English translations of T.G. Masaryk and Paul Ricoeur.
6. H.G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Metode,* Tübingen, 1960.
7. Voskovec, *op.cit.,* p. 12.
8. Robert Musil, *Sämtliche Erzählungen,* Hamburg, 1970, p. 201.
9. Austrian novelist (1886-1951).
10. Austrian novelist (1894-1939).
11. Italian novelist of Austrian extraction (1861-1928).
12. Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie,* The Hague, 1962, pp. 51-52.
13. Joseph Roth, *Das falsche Gewicht: die Geschichte eines Eichmeisters,* Frankfurt am Main, 1965, pp. 8, 9, 20.
14. Hermann Broch, *Die Schlafwandler,* Zürich, 1932, pp. 19-20.
15. This and the following quotations are taken from: Jaroslav Hašek, *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války,* Prague, 1962.
16. Jiří Wolker (1900-1924), Czech avant-garde poet, the most important representative of the early twentieth-century Czech school of 'proletarian poetry'.
17. Milan Kundera, *Život je jinde,* Toronto, 1979, p. 257.
18. Toman, *op.cit.,* p. 27.
19. Hašek, *Dějiny strany mírného pokroku v mezích zákona,* Prague, 1963, p. 272.
20. Austrian novelist (1874-1936).
21. Austrian novelist of Spanish-Jewish extraction (b. 1905), winner of the 1981 Nobel Prize for Literature.
22. Franz Kafka, *Der Prozess,* Frankfurt am Main, 1964, p. 165.
23. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus,* London, 1922, 6.52, 6.521.
24. Karl Kraus, *Beim Wort genommen,* Munich, 1955, p. 83.
25. A reference to an entry in Kafka's diary for 28.9.1915 (Franz Kafka, *Tagebücher (1910-23),* Frankfurt am Main, 1967).
26. Jan Patočka (1907-1977), Czech philosopher, disciple of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, whose ideas he developed; historian of philosophy. He edited, translated from Latin and annotated a major part of the work of the Czech educationalist and thinker Jan Ámos Komenský (Comenius, 1592-1670), published Husserl's *Erfahrung und Urteil* (Prague, 1938). The edition was destroyed by the Nazis; after the war it was reprinted (from a single surviving copy); he has also compiled Husserl's bibliography (1939). He wrote extensively on pre-Socratic philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Comenius, Herder, Hegel, Husserl and others. Among his own philosophical writings are *Přirozený svět jako filozofický problém* (1936, also transl. into French), *Kacířské eseje o filozofii dějin* (circulated in typescript 1975, published in Munich in 1980; also transl. into French and Italian) and numerous other works. In 1977 he signed the Human Rights Manifesto *Charter 77*; died of a stroke during a protracted police interrogation.
27. Ernst Mach (1838-1916), Austrian phenomenalist philosopher.
28. Kundera, *op.cit.,* p. 351.
29. *Ibid.,* p. 352.

Thomas G. Winner (essay date 1988)

SOURCE: Winner, Thomas G. "Literature as a Source for Anthropological Research: The Case of Jaroslav Hašek's *Good Soldier Švejk.*" In *Literary Anthropology: A New Interdisciplinary Approach to People, Signs and Literature,* edited by Fernando Poyatos, pp. 51-62. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1988.

[*In the following essay, Winner asks the question of whether a work of literature can serve as a reliable source of information for "culturological research," and he uses Hašek's* The Good Soldier Schweik *as a model text to answer this question. Highlighting the devices Hašek employs in his novel, such as inverting the expectations of its "syntagmatic form" from epic to mock-epic and his innovative use of language, Winner concludes that* Schweik *is helpful to the culturological researcher "only insofar as we possess other, nonartistic, texts against which we can check the* Švejk *data, including its language."*]

INTRODUCTION

This paper approaches the question of literary anthropology from the point of view of literature. It is from the perspective of an interest in the theory of literature,

and particularly from that of a concern with the question how literature functions in culture, that I shall try to elucidate and delimit the concept of literary anthropology. I will ask: In what respect and to what extent can a work of literature be a source for documenting cultural phenomena? How is a literary text related to cultural phenomena external to it? Can we establish relations of homomorphy between a literary text and other cultural manifestations? It will be my contention that literature can, indeed, serve as a documentary source for the culturological researcher; but that the road from the literary text to nonliterary cultural data is never direct, but pursues most complex and intricate paths. I will then apply my answers to these questions to one text of twentieth century Czech literature, Jaroslav Hašek's, ***The Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk in the World War.***

Literature is not a direct reflection of cultural phenomena

1.1

I will begin by showing that literature is never a direct reflection of cultural phenomena and events. Thus the question of homomorphy between the literary text and other cultural phenomena must be answered in the negative. Rather, literature is related to extra-literary cultural phenomena in an attenuated and transformed manner. This is a function of the fact that literature, as all aesthetic systems, is essentially self-oriented or autotelic. That is, artistic messages do not function, in contrast to historical or scientific texts, primarily to elicit information about the world outside the text (the objective context with such a text signifies, the author, the codes, etc.), but to rivet attention onto the text itself, onto its construction. Thus, unlike referential or scientific texts describing a certain reality, the aesthetic text is introverted and its relation to its object is fundamentally different. Yet, paradoxically, such a text consists of material taken from the world external to it; it may describe human action, clothes, facial expressions, voice, it may depict objects of nature, of architecture, citiscapes, automobiles, food, political events. But in contrast to other types of texts, literature exploits the real world not for its own sake, in order to describe and comment upon it, but for the sake of the literary text itself, the construction of a fictive world. Thus we may say, in a rather oversimplified manner, that the events and objects taken from the 'world out there' are in the text for the sake of the text, rather than vice versa, as is the case in other types of texts. Even in an historical novel which, by its very nature, can lay claim to a high degree of homomorphy between text and life, such iconism is weakened by the text's aesthetic essence. Utilizing the terminology of the Russian formalists, we may say that a historical novel transforms the *fabula* of the historic events into the *sujet* of the novel; or that it transforms raw historical data into what Genette (1972:72) called a *récit,* by removing facts from their historical sequentiality through the process of selection from the total historical paradigm, and by reordering these facts to fit into the artistically rearranged sequence of the novel. For this reason, for instance, we could never use Tolstoi's *War and Peace* and Stendhal's *Le rouge et le noir* as a document for the ascertaining of historical phenomena. For in these novels historical events are selected and ordered solely to fit into the plans of the novel's autonomous text. This means that important historical facts are omitted or their sequence rearranged, and other elements which have no documentary value are accentuated. Furthermore, historical events are mixed with fictive events, of significance for the novel's fictional world, but at least misleading to the researcher looking for documentation in the literary text (e.g. Napoleon's twitching leg muscle in *War and Peace*). In the case of Tolstoi's novel, battle scenes, descriptions of diplomatic missions, the depiction of Napoleon and the Russian Emperor and their actions, serve a dominant function which is *not* that of representing reality for the sake of documentation; rather, they are related in such a fashion that they are connected to the other main domain of the novel, namely the personal lives of its protagonists, the Rostovs, Pierre, Nicolas, Andrew, Natasha, etc.; and together with these, the historical and diplomatic events form an intricate fictive world in which a historical Napoleon interacts with a fictive Prince Andrew, with a fictive world which is not related in any straightforward way to the historical events. Just as history in becoming *récit* is inescapably transformed, so are other cultural phenomena which form part of the novel, from its material, the natural language, to such elements as kinship relations and marriage prohibitions (which incidentally play an important role in the plan of *War and Peace*), systems of social hierarchy, of clothing, kinesic codes and their texts, perceptions of time and space, and even the setting. Thus a literary text can never substitute for fieldwork. It can, however, serve as corroborating documentation, if used *together* with other sources.

1.2

Does this mean that we deny that the literary text has any relation to cultural systems and their manifestations? The Russian Formalists and the American New Critics would have said so; for they saw the literary text as self-sufficient and immanent. But today we no longer accept the absurd assertion of the immanence of the literary work, and to deny a connection between the literary text and extra-textual systems and their manifestations would be as serious an error as to read a literary text as a direct documentary source. How then can we approach this problem? What is the relation of literature to culture in the broader sense? And how thus *can* literature serve as an anthropological tool?

1.3

We begin by saying that literature, just as all the other arts, is a system existing within culture. It is thus, in itself, a part of the culture that has produced it; and it becomes, through its being made concrete in other cultures and other epochs, also a part of the many cultures of its many consumers, since every culture reads the same novel somewhat differently. We further accept Mukařovský's statement that all art is a form of intersubjective communication proceeding in full and complex cultural context. An author composes a text which is addressed to an implicit reader but is—in fact—decoded by a multitude of real readers in a synchronic time slice and, diachronically over history. The history of literature is, in fact, as Mukařovský and Vodička have shown, a continuing dialogue between an implicit reader, and an implicit author, the latter being the hypothetical subject, that, in the words of Červenka, 'principle of dynamic unity' that produces a global coherence to a variety of artistic choices that make up the text (Červenka 1973:165). Neither the author nor the many concrete readers of the text operate in a vacuum. The author's creative act proceeds in the context of the artistic codes and the texts generated by these codes of his time and place. The question of the relation of the artistic code of the author's time and place to the production of a specific text is extremely complex and involves the problem of the dialectical tension in a text between norm and its violation, which I have treated elsewhere (Winner, 1979, 1983) and therefore will not discuss it here. I want to say only that, while literary texts exert influence on text generation, the question of texts 'influencing' texts is much more complex than traditional comparative literature would have had it. For when a literary text enters into the parameter of another literary text, it does so again in transformed manner in order to function in a new text (Cf. Winner 1956).

Not only artistic codes and their texts, however, touch upon the author subliminally as he creates his text. Other cultural codes and *their* concrete manifestations do so as well. This is certainly true of the code of the natural language of the author's time and place, which the latter utilizes, molds, and transforms into an artistic utterance, in which the norms of the grammar are also transformed, bent, broken; in this process the author is bound only relatively by the grammatical rules: and different periods have utilized linguistic codes with different degrees of freedom. We know of periods of minimal violation of linguistic rules (e.g. Neoclassicism) and epochs where authors felt free to create idiosyncratic lexical items with no 'normal' referent (Cf. The poems by Hugo Ball, Christian Morgenstern, and the Russian Futurist Kručennyx).

Extra-artistic cultural codes and their manifestations partake of the literary text in the same transformed way. As an example, we may ask how mythical codes enter a literary text. Again, they do so rarely in a straightforward manner. For instance, the Christ story forms one of the bases of Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* and of Kafka's *Metamorphosis,* but this does not mean that we can use Bulgakov's novel or Kafka's *novella* as documentation for New Testament texts. If a researcher from a distant culture, unacquainted with the Christ story, were to use these texts as document and had at his disposal no other resource, that scholar would go far afield indeed. And this brings us to the equally tricky question of the reader's end of the 'dialogue'. For, just as the author does not operate in a cultural vacuum, neither does the reader, who works from the basis of cultural code systems that may only partially overlap with those of the author. As I have pointed out elsewhere (1979), while there may be a minimal overlap between author's and reader's codes, if there is no overlap at all communication cannot proceed any more than it can in any other mode of communication (for instance, two speakers of non-cognate languages who do not speak other's language at all). The fact that the reader is, just as the author, under the subliminal influence of all the cultural codes and their texts of his time and place is of great importance here. It tells us that the same text can be read in very different ways by readers in different cultural situations and historical periods, depending on contextuality in its broadest sense. In addition, because of memory, the contextuality on the reader's side of the equation is cumulative (Cf. Winner 1979 and 1983) and contains all preceding codes and their texts with which a given reader is familiar.

How does all this apply to a specific text?

I have chosen Jaroslav Hašek's novel ***The Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk in the World War,*** not only because this is the 100th anniversary of the birth of its author, and it is thus appropriate to commemorate him, but primarily, because the text has a seemingly close relationship to cultural phenomena, to historical, sociological, political facts of the period just preceding the birth of the Czechoslovak Republic. For this reason, the text has often been read and interpreted as an ideological document.

Hašek's novel deals with its material already from an historical perspective, for it was finished only in 1921, at least in the form in which we read it today.[1] It was thus not published until the events and situations described in it were already part of history: the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had collapsed, and Czechoslovakia was an independent republic.

2.1

What was the broad cultural situation which is the setting for ***Švejk*** [***The Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk in the World War***]? What is the historico-cultural background that forms the *fabula,* the raw material, out of which ***Švejk*** is fashioned?

In the Czech lands, the world of the first two decades of the present century was one of transition, of rebellion, in which a small nation was awakening to its national feelings, and was rebelling against the existing order of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. This brought with it a break with old values and verities, such as patriotism, loyalty, social hierarchy, etc., and a new attitude to the national language, a burgeoning faith in nationhood, a sense that a David can defeat a Goliath. We can add to this that Jaroslav Hašek, Švejk's creator, was on the far left of the political spectrum. He had served in the newly founded Red Army in revolutionary Russia as a political commissar, and had returned to his native land with revolutionary attitudes towards the established socio-economic-political order and its values.

The novel is set in the period of World War I. Its hero is Josef Švejk, a beer-swilling, pub-crawling proletarianized trader in mongrel dogs with questionable faked pedigrees. Drafted into the Austrian Army, he becomes an officially declared idiot (*úředně prohlášený blb*) and by his stupidity (real or pretended) he gets the better of all his superiors. He remains in the army at the lowest possible rank and moves from officer to officer as orderly.

How is the cultural situation modeled in this work? Does the work reflect, and if so how, the revolutionary situation of the time of its origin? We will speak only about two aspects of this question, the syntagmatic-semantic shape of the novel and the way in which it uses language.

The Novel's Syntagmatic Form. How Does it Signify?

Periods of radical change in cultural values frequently are accompanied by a relativization of traditional cultural norms. We know that the radical changes wrought in the social fabric of Europe after World War I were paralleled by an equally radical artistic revolution which brought dada, futurism, surrealism, cubism, abstractionism, and expressionism. And Hašek's novel partakes of these revolutionary changes; it represents a radical break with the tradition of the novel as a genre in the novel's semantic and syntagmatic structure. This break with tradition is apparent in the way ***Švejk*** fits into the established system of literary genres, for, in a sense, the novel pretends to be something which it is not. Its external format, including its title, prepares the reader for the traditional epic; for a recitation about heroic actions, loyalty, bravery, etc. This is especially so in the Czech cultural context, because in the period immediately following the World War, when *Švejk* was published, a special type of epic was much in fashion in Czechoslovakia: heroic sagas, often highly sentimentalized, about the action of the Czechoslovak Legions who fought on the side of the Russian armies against Austria, and were thus involved in the Russian Civil War. The heroes of these epics were brave warriors whose values were courage, loyalty, truth and patriotism. The best known among the chroniclers of Czechoslovak military exploits in Russia and in Siberia was a General, Rudolph Medek (1890-1940), a literary traditionalist who depicted the battles of the various campaigns in a five-volume epic entitled *Anabasis* (1921-1927), a series of heroic, patriotic chronicles which have been called 'analogues to the Hussite chronicles of Jirásek' (Novák 1976:289). And there were many lesser authors who flooded the bookstores with sentimental stories about the heroism of Czech patriots. Against this background there appears Hašek's anti-epic. In its title, every word hints at epic content, and every word lies, for the epic content never materializes. For behind every word of the title lurks its opposite. ***The Aventures of the Good Soldier Švejk***: the "adventures" are anything but heroic, they are grotesque and absurd, a kind of twentieth-century version of the adventures of Don Quixote who fights the windmills. The "good soldier" is a terrible soldier and, in addition, a real or pretended idiot. He is a clown and his clownmodels are the comic heroes of folklore: Till Eulenspiegel, Paleček, Petruška, Hodža Nassredin. Nothing in the body of the work fulfills the promise of the title that what follows will be a traditional narrative about the glorious adventures of war heroes. Just as the title, so also the mock serious epigraph hints at a heroic narrative which is not forthcoming.

> Great times demand great men. They are unrecognized heroes, who are modest, without the glory and history of a Napoleon. An analysis of their character would put even the glory of Alexander the Great into the shade. Today you can meet in the streets of Prague a badly dressed man who does not know what he really means to the history of our great new times. Modestly he goes after his affairs, he does not bother anyone and is also himself not bothered by journalists asking him for interviews. If you were to ask his name, he would answer you simply and modestly: 'I am Švejk . . .' And this quiet, modest, badly dressed man is really the same old good soldier Švejk, brave and heroic, whose name was on the lips of all citizens of the Czech Kingdom in the Austrian days, and whose glory will never be forgotten, not even in the Republic.
>
> I like this good soldier Švejik very much. And in presenting his adventures during the World War, I am convinced that you will all sympathise with this modest, unrecognized hero. He did not put the temple in Ephesos to flames, like the fool Herostratos, to get his name into the newspapers and into schoolbooks. And that is enough.

Yet ***Švejk*** is not a comic novel; for behind the laughter that it evokes, there lurks bitter sadness. The novel is replete with black humor, anticipating the texts of the Czech and other surrealists, and it is filled with the absurd, anticipatory of the works of dada. For instance, in

Chapter VII, when Švejk goes to report to his draft board, he does so being pushed by his cleaning woman in a wheelchair, patriotically waving his crutches at the crowds that applaud him. When he is escorted, as a prisoner, by an armed guard with fixed bayonets, he waves to the crowd benevolently, like an actor acknowledging applause, or like the Emperor Franz Joseph acknowledging the ovation of his loyal subjects.

The syntagmatic structure of the work also destroys the traditional epic narration which is predominantly linear. For ***Švejk*** is not linear and therefore metonymic, but paradigmatic, consisting of a multiple collage of collages, where the most inappropriate events, characters, and objects, are juxtaposed in a metaphoric sense. Inappropriate as this may sound, the text in its metaphoricity is closer to the lyric—in which lines and stanzas are confronted by the principle of similarity and opposition—than to epic narration.

On the level of description, we have sharp and naturalistic montages. For instance, this is the way the battlefield looks from a military train through Svejk's eyes:

> Here you saw rusty teapots, cups, and ammunition bags. Here there were also draped among various objects clumps of barbed wire and then again you saw bloody streamers of bandage and gauze (674). . . . And really there lay provocatively a chamber pot with banged-up metal, rusty, among the chards of pots, all of which objects, which could no longer be used for households, were placed here by the station master as material for the discussion of archeologists of future ages . . .
>
> (675)

Also in its syntagmatic-semantic structure, the novel is very different from traditional epic form. Instead of being a string of heroic episodes, of Odysseus's travels and the heroic battles of the Legionaires, ***Švejk*** consists of a sequence of seemingly incidental anecdotes, often recounted with a strong beer-hall flavor and language. One anecdote leads to another, as Švejk is reminded of seeming parallels to historical and other serious events. These anecdotes form a complex string of irrelevancies, an absurd and often grotesque montage of people and events.

Most of these anecdotes are related by Švejk himself who uses them as examples, as absurd metaphors or parables, of the events of the narration. Here Švejk becomes a parody of Christ and his parables, for Švejk's anecdotes illustrate neither a moral attitude nor religious principles. They are always lower and always move the seriousness that might have been epical to the level of the ludicrous. We can only give one example, here, perhaps the most famous. It occurs at the beginning of the novel, when Švejk learns from his cleaning woman that the Archduke Ferdinand has been assassinated, the event that gave the external impetus to World War I:

> 'So they killed our Ferdinand,' said the cleaning woman to Mr. Švejk, who had left the military service some years ago and had been officially pronounced feeble-minded by the military commission and now lived from the sale of dogs, ugly monsters of mixed origin, whose papers he faked. (First collage)
>
> In addition to this occupation he was troubled by rheumatism, and was just massaging his knee with an ointment. (Second collage—in which the assassination of the Archduke is confronted with two insignificant details.)
>
> 'Which Ferdinand, Mrs. Mueller?' asked Švejk, without stopping the massaging of his knee, 'I know two Ferdinands. One is an errand boy who works for the druggist Prouša and once drank a bottle of hair tonic by mistake: (Fourth collage) and then I know Ferdinand Kokoška, who collects dog turds in Nusle. (Fifth collage) Nobody would miss those two.'

The death of the Archduke reminds Švejk of two banal figures, and the cleaning lady, in turn, is reminded of a neighbor who had killed his whole family as well as the janitor with his revolver (Sixth collage), which in turn reminds Švejk of the man who had stabbed the Empress Elizabeth in a Vienna park (Seventh collage), etc., etc., and so the novel continues, one event evoking a low anecdote which, in turn, evokes another, and forms a seemingly endless string of such absurd metonymic metaphors.

Language

Perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of ***Švejk*** is the way in which it utilizes the Czech literary language. Here a brief excursion into the history of the Czech literary language is necessary.

4.1

The defeat of the Czech forces in 1620 in the Battle of the White Mountain ushered in almost two centuries of unlimited Austrian political, economic, and cultural domination and the Czech language ceased, for all intents and purposes, to exist in written form. While the Czech vernacular remained alive in the countryside and among the lower classes in the cities, and continued to be the medium of oral art, it was replaced as a written medium by German for the burghers, French and German for the aristocrats, and German and Latin for the intelligentsia. Thus Czech continued to evolve in its oral form, while as a written medium it had ceased to exist. When, in the early nineteenth century, the Czech Enlighteners recodified the language, they chose as their model the language of the written documents of the Czech baroque of the seventeenth century which by now was far removed from the language of oral use.

Because the Czech spoken language had radically changed since the seventeenth century, not only on the morphophonemic but also on the lexical and syntactic

levels, there arose a peculiar linguistic situation which still effects the Czech language today, namely the emergence of a diglossic system. Even today, Czech language culture remains partially bilingual in the sense that the written and spoken language are two functionally and structurally distinctive and often widely divergent dialects. While there are some contemporary norm-breaking experiments in the literature, the spoken language cannot easily be used in writing nor in formal speaking, and to speak in the written language, except for formal presentations, appears to Czech speakers to be ridiculous. Such a diglossia of Czech language culture has significantly effected the evolution of Czech literary culture and the growth of Czech ethnic self-identification at home and abroad.

In nineteenth-century literature, the distinction between vernacular and literary languages was severely observed, and oral forms were not admitted into literary texts. In prose, even the discourse of the characters, their spoken word, followed the norms of the written language. Even works which consciously harkened back to Czech folk art, such as Erben's *Kytice* and Čelakovsky's *Ohlasy* followed the strictly codified written form. Thus Božena Němcová's famous novel *Babička 'The Grandmother'* (1855), placed in a rural setting and written under the direct influence of folk narratives, has peasants talk in written Czech style, with seventeenth-century syntax with verb-final sentences. No real peasant could have spoken in this manner, nor would he even have understood what he is quoted as saying. Here we have, for instance, an example of the difficulties of using literary texts as direct documentation, on this case linguistic.

Švejk represents the first major attempt to mediate this diglossia created by the contrast between written and spoken dialects. It is these linguistic innovations which are perhaps the most striking features of ***Švejk.*** For not only is the direct speech of the characters ordinary spoken Czech, but there is also admixed the language of the Prague working class districts, pure metropolitan racey slang, a slang that has a strong admixture of substandard, nongrammatical German.

Conclusion

Thus a revolutionary novel is a repository of a multitude of transformed cultural elements, from the language to the general cultural attitudes and value systems. Thus in ***Švejk*** Czech identity is no longer epitomized by the folk hero who defends national identity and the national language; in its stead there appears an urbanized proletarianized petty bourgeois fool. It is Josef Švejk, the trader in mongrel dogs with fake pedigrees, who has done time in an insane asylum, and who speaks a typical urban racey slang, in whom there resides the power to establish the identity of Czech culture as opposed to the great and powerful Austrian potentates.

Can ***Švejk*** serve as a document for culturological research? The answer must be an evasive yes/no. It is certainly not the same type of straight-forward source as field notes. We might perhaps say that it provides information only insofar as we possess other, nonartistic, texts against which we can check the ***Švejk*** data, including its language.

But this novel can give us ample information nevertheless; and it does so in an oblique fashion. For it tells us how Hašek selects and arranges the material of the real world to create his own absurd fictive world. And this gives us at least all-important information about one type of cultural code, the aesthetic one. And since art is so important a part of culture, this alone would justify the field of literary anthropology.

Note

1. The first stories about Švejk had appeared as early as 1912. A part of the novel appeared in a publication of the Czech Army in revolutionary Russia.

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Alan Menhennet (essay date 1991)

SOURCE: Menhennet, Alan. Introduction to *The Bachura Scandal and Other Stories and Sketches,* by Jaroslav Hašek, translated by Alan Menhennet, pp. 7-12. London: Angel Books, 1991.

[*In the following essay, originally published as his introduction to an English-language edition of some of Hašek's short stories, Menhennet provides a brief biog-*

raphy of Hašek and comments on his contributions as a story writer, saying that it is his humor rather than his satire that saves him "as a writer of importance."]

Jaroslav Hašek was born in Prague on 30 April 1883. The inexorable but absurd logic that governs the lives of so many of his characters presided over his birth as well, for he was born both a Czech and an Austrian and lived for the greater part of his life under the authority of the strange two-headed beast that was the Habsburg Empire. Prague was the Czech capital, but it was a 'provincial Austrian city'[1] and its administration was that of the strictly 'Austrian' (that is, spiritually if not necessarily linguistically 'German') part of the Austro-Hungarian state. During the course of the nineteenth century, the Czechs had managed to revive and rebuild their national consciousness.[2] Yet it is the Austrian customs through which the Czech traveller in the story of that name, who is returning from a Saxony which directly borders Bohemia, has to pass, and whose regulations will permit him to set foot in his *vlast,* his homeland, only if he agrees to the removal of one of his kidneys. The bumbling petty bourgeois benefactor Mr Kauble, when confronted by a visiting dignitary who embodies the state, speaks, 'like a good Czech', in German.

A good Czech, from the Habsburg point of view, was an Austrian Czech. Whether the local Sheriff or the customs official spoke Czech or German, he *thought* German and felt the allegiance to the German dynasty, and its black-and-gold colours, that informed the principal arms of the state, its civil service and its officer-corps. Hašek reserves his most hilarious and often savage satire for the 'loyal' Czech, such as the egregious Lieutenant Dub in ***The Fortunes of the Good Soldier Schweik*** (1921-3) or the toll-collector Štěpán Brych, who sacrifices his own life, as well as that of a mere 'civilian', in order that the statutory kreuzer should be rendered unto the Emperor.

Hašek's home circumstances were middle-class, but rather precariously so. His father, an alcoholic, worked in relatively low-paid teaching and banking jobs and died in 1896. His mother seems to have been unable to provide the parental discipline that he clearly needed. He had started well at grammar-school, but both his performance and his behaviour deteriorated and after several brushes with the police, he was expelled. On one occasion, the police had found his pockets stuffed full of stones (which he claimed were part of the school's geological collection), a fragment of his biography which reappears (as do many others) in one of his stories (**"The Coffin-Dealer"**). Hašek cannot, to be sure, be absolved from all blame for the false starts and failures of his own life, yet here too, we do seem at times to detect the amoral principle of cussedness and inconsequentiality that rules in his comic writing: as if he were sometimes naïvely acting out the comedy of life by following momentary impulses. One wonders, for example, whether he had a clear intention in his mind when in 1911, after the break with Jarmila, he climbed the parapet of the Charles Bridge (the incident reflected in **"A Psychiatric Puzzle"**), to claim afterwards that he wanted to be sick into the river rather than on the pavement in front of Saint John Nepomuk.[3]

A job with a chemist did not last long and a second chemist suggested to his mother that his place was at the Czechoslavonic Commercial Academy, where, not without distinction, he completed his education from 1899 to 1902. By this time, his career as a writer had already begun. A number of stories, based mainly on his travels on foot around some of the farther-flung outposts of the Empire, had appeared in a variety of journals. Hašek mixed briefly in avant-garde literary circles but while drinking and talking in pubs and cafés was much to his taste—and remained so—he was out of sympathy with the aesthetic mode of thought. He was a born writer, but an anti-'poetic' one by nature.

Ideally suited to the bohemian life, Hašek was, to use Cecil Parrott's phrase, a 'Bad Bohemian'[4] as far as his social existence was concerned. After overlooking one period of absence without leave, the Slavie Bank sacked him on the second occasion, in 1903. Between 1904 and 1906, the nearest he seems to have come to a settled occupation was his involvement with the anarchist movement. His general sympathies were with the radical left and he would no doubt have felt a certain temperamental affinity with anarchism, but it is doubtful whether he had firm anarchist convictions and he eventually detached himself from this rather dubious company and spent some time travelling, most notably in Bavaria, where he no doubt met the prototype of his ***Tourist Guide.***

In 1906, he fell in love with Jarmila Mayerová and she with him. Her parents had their doubts as to his suitability as a son-in-law and it was not until 1910 that he was able to overcome their resistance. In the interim, he flirted intermittently with anarchism, got himself arrested and indulged his penchant for turning life as well as art into caricature as campaign-manager for the National Social Party during a Prague by-election in 1908. He was particularly hard on the traditional nationalist party, the Young Czechs, which clearly took itself and the conventional political game too seriously for his taste. One of its leading activists, Milada Sisová, was guyed as the 'Czech Maid of Orleans'. She reappears in this role in the story **"Election Day in the Malá Strana."**[5]

Thanks to the good offices of his friend Ladislav Hájek, he obtained a post on the staff of the magazine *Animal World* and inherited the editorship from Hájek in due

course. On the strength of this, he was married to Jarmila, but regular employment and settled married bliss were of short duration. An inveterate hoaxer and prankster, Hašek found the purveying of true facts about real animals too boring and treated his readers to more exotic fare. Elephants, they were no doubt intrigued to learn, like to hear music played on the gramophone; tigers, on the other hand, do not. The fossil of an 'antediluvian flea' was solemnly 'discovered'. The last straw was the special offer of a pair of thoroughbred werewolves. Once again, Hašek found himself without a job and a 'Cynological Institute' (Hašek's pseudo-scientific designation of his activities as a dog-dealer) founded soon afterwards also failed in short order. Both episodes were most fruitful as material for stories and for episodes in ***Schweik*** [***The Good Soldier Schweik***]. The marriage broke down, though not terminally, and Jarmila went back to live with her parents.

It was in this year (1911) that the 'suicide-attempt' on the Charles Bridge took place, and that Hašek perpetrated his greatest hoax, as the mock-candidate of a spoof-party, the ***Party for Moderate Progress Within the Limits of the Law,*** in the Prague district of Vinohrady. The meetings, at which he made witty and scurrilous impromptu speeches, were held in a pub and the manifesto contained such proposals as the nationalisation of concierges and the 'rehabilitation of animals'. The use of animal-names in abusive language was to be prohibited: an ox, at 700 kilos, was of more importance than a parliamentary candidate at about 80. Hašek then wrote a mock-serious ***History*** [***The History of the Party of Moderate Progress within the Bounds of the Law***] of the party which was so full of slanderous remarks and portraits that although it was ready in 1912, it was not published in full until many years after the author's death.

When he was called up in 1915, Hašek joined the 91st Infantry Regiment and eventually arrived at the Galician front, where he was taken prisoner by the Russians, then released and allowed to join the Czech Legion. He worked for a time for *Čechoslovan,* the organ of a conservative group of Pan-Slav orientation which was based in Kiev, and it was there, in 1916, that the last of the stories in this selection appeared.

The rest of Hašek's career may be summarised briefly. He deserted from the Legion after 1917 and joined the Bolsheviks, whose strict discipline enabled him to stop drinking for a time and with whom he seems to have felt genuinely at home. He rose to positions of some prominence in the Russian Communist Party, and in 1920 was sent back to the newly established Czech Republic, with a Russian wife whom he had bigamously acquired along the way, presumably to work for the Communist cause. But there was little chance of progress in that direction and in any case, old habits returned with his return home. But as a double deserter, he was generally suspect. And he was no longer capable of a sustained bohemian existence. He became depressed and generally out of sorts. And then came the inspiration of turning Schweik, who had first made his appearance in a series of (not very inspired) pre-war short stories, into the 'hero' of a full-length novel. He spent the last two years of his life in Lipnice, in the Bohemian-Moravian highlands, writing ***Schweik*** and growing progressively more unhealthy. He died with his masterpiece still unfinished.

Hašek as a satirist is, as Robert Pynsent has shown,[6] but one among many in a rich Czech tradition. The targets of his satire are the predictable ones and are attacked effectively enough.[7] But Hašek the humorist is a different matter. It is in this capacity that he speaks to us, not about life as it is or ought to be, which (for all their recognition of the grotesque side) seems to be the view of him taken by the Communist critics,[8] but about Life. By this, I mean the force which lies latent in our carefully constructed and ordered reality and is always capable, often hilariously, but often also savagely, even frighteningly, of disrupting that order. And it is necessary as well as natural that it should do so, for deliberately or not, this order of ours often suppresses freedom. It is this force that informs Hašek's humour at its most characteristic. And it is its presence that helps to explain why his crassness, his frequent bad taste and his disregard of the aesthetic niceties do not rule him out of consideration as a writer of importance.

That **"The Bachura Scandal"** should centre on a urinal and a public convenience is, primarily at least, not some kind of symbolism, neither is it the result of a simple taste for the cloacal. The effect is that of the defeat of the spirit of convention and organised procedure. In **"Robbery and Murder in Court,"** the story of a man who is patently a victim of society in the classic satirical sense is concluded not with a cry of rage, not with a sentimental whimper, but with a fart as the order of the courtroom, which has been teetering on the brink throughout, finally subsides like a punctured balloon.

There is a direct relationship between the form of Hašek's stories and their substance. They were, of course, *feuilletons,* written for money and written at speed. But such journalistic considerations do not necessarily rule out a sense of form and in particular, as many a practised piece in the 'quality' newspapers can demonstrate, the gentle art of the rounded conclusion. Hašek's stories, however, do not so much end as stop. His *modus operandi* as a contributor to the journal *Tribuna* is revealing.[9] He would turn up at the offices with nothing written, whereupon the routine was to lock him into a room with paper, pencil and one glass of beer. Eventually, he would emerge, hand over some sheets covered in neat, 'rather childish' writing and ask '*Je*

toho dost?' (Is that enough?), pocket the advance for his next piece and go on his way. He was turning on a tap, letting it run for what seemed an appropriate period and then shutting it off.

Viewed aesthetically, Hašek's conclusions are sometimes clumsy and peremptory. He simply kills off a character, packs him off to an asylum or has him faint, as in **"The Demon Barber of Prague."** But the true ending is the open ending which is often clearly visible through such ostensible 'conclusions'. The unity of these stories derives from the fact that they all belong to a gigantic tapestry and running through this, visible only in its effects, is the comic law.

Just as honesty is 'for rich folk', as the lumberman says in **"The Struggle for Souls,"** so heroism is for the world of seriousness, respectability and tragedy. Chocholka, the dunce who flees from the Latin test into the toilet and whose desperate defence of this last redoubt is linked with Thermopylae, is no hero. He acts by instinct (as Schweik often does) and becomes the involuntary vehicle of the spirit of humour. A consistent, programmatic anarchism, life spent entirely in the madhouse, would not have been what Hašek wanted. Maybe the attraction that Communism in revolutionary Russia held for him had to do with a feeling that here, order could at last be blended with freedom. He would not have been the only one to make such a mistake. The 'Bugulma' stories written during his period as a 'Commissar' in Russia show him in his own persona (as 'Gashek', for the Russians have no *h*), trying to create an idyll, to make order grow out of disorder.

At his most characteristic and effective though, Hašek deals in a reality that blends into phantasmagoria, albeit in a way very different from that of that other great Prague storyteller, Kafka. Chaos is needed in Hašek as a corrective to a world of order which is something of a prison-house and in which the price of freedom is eternal comic vigilance. It is a world in which one has to struggle in order to avoid being sucked down, as Štěpán Brych already has been before the story begins, into a whirlpool in which life is no more than the fulfilment of some official' role. Not that freedom automatically confers safety: in Hašek, neither mouse nor man can be entirely safe. But it does confer the gift of laughter, and through all the deaths and disasters of these stories, that is the sound most frequently heard: the essentially positive response of a comic writer to a comic world.

Notes

1. Cf. Robert Pynsent, 'Jaroslav Hašek' in *European Writers. The Twentieth Century* (ed. George Stade), New York, 1989, p. 1092.
2. Led in the initial stages by the cultural and political 'Awakeners', many of whom, notably Karel Havlíček (1821-56), are mentioned in *A Sporting Sketch,* and then by the 'Old Czech' and 'Young Czech' parties, the movement had succeeded within Bohemia in reestablishing a strong Czech cultural, commercial and political life. It failed, however, to make substantive progress at the national 'Austrian' level.
3. See E. A. Longen (E. A. Pitterman), *Můj Přítel Jaroslav Hašek,* Prague, 1983, p. 30.
4. See Cecil Parrott, *The Bad Bohemian. The Life of Jaroslav Hašek, Creator of the Good Soldier Švejk,* London, 1978.
5. And again in the *History of the Party for Moderate Progress Within the Limits of the Law,* where, on account of her gruff voice, she is mistaken for a man.
6. Op. cit., p. 1096.
7. They are discussed at length by Cecil Parrott, *Jaroslav Hašek. A Study of Švejk and the Short Stories,* Cambridge, 1982, pp. 75ff.
8. See, for example, Jiři Hájek, *Jaroslav Hašek,* Prague, 1983, pp. 109ff. and Radko Pytlík, *Jaroslav Hašek and the Good Soldier Schweik* (translated by David Short), Prague, 1982, especially pp. 20, 43-4 and 77, where the reactions of Hašek and Kafka to the 'absurdity' of the modern world are distinguished on the basis of the former's discovery of 'the solid reality and variety of life'.
9. I owe this anecdote to Professor J. P. Stern.

Works Cited

The text used in this translation is that contained in the three volumes of the Selected Works designated as the 'First', 'Second' and 'Third Decameron' (Prague, Český Spisovatel, 1976-9, principal editor Radko Pytlík).

Eight of the thirty-two stories contained in this volume have already appeared in English translation, in the collection *The Tourist Guide* (Prague, Artia, 1961; translated by I. T. Havlů).

Jennifer Cushman (essay date 2004)

SOURCE: Cushman, Jennifer. "Criminal Apprehension: Prague Minorities and the Habsburg Legal System in Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* and Franz Kafka's *The Trial.*" In *Literature and Law,* edited by Michael J. Meyer, pp. 51-65. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004.

[*In the following essay, Cushman applies the concept of "minor literature" put forth by the French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to her study of Hašek's* The Good Soldier Schweik *and Franz Kafka's*

The Trial, *examining "the biographies and texts of the two authors in terms of their portrayals of representatives of legal authorities" in the Habsburg monarchy, such as police officers and soldiers, to answer the question whether both of these texts can "be considered examples of minor literature."*]

In "Hašek and Kafka," Karel Kosík postulates a near convergence of apprehended criminals in two unfinished Prague novels of the early 1920's, namely Jaroslav Hašek's ***The Good Soldier Švejk*** [***The Good Soldier Švejk and His Fortunes in the World War***][1] and Franz Kafka's *The Trial.*[2]

> "[Josef] Švejk's 'odyssey under the honorable escort of two soldiers with bayonets' takes him from the Hračdany garrison jail along Neruda Street to Malá Strana and over the Charles Bridge to Karlín. It is an interesting group of three people: two guards escorting a delinquent. From the opposite direction over the Charles Bridge and up to Strahov, another trio makes its way. This is the threesome from Kafka's *Trial*: two guards leading a 'delinquent,' the bank clerk Josef K., to the Strahov quarries, where one of them will 'thrust a knife into his heart.' Both groups pass through the same places, but meeting each other is impossible."[3]

As executors of an inconsistent legal system, Josef Švejk's soldiers and Josef K.'s guards unflatteringly represent the Austro-Hungarian bureaucracy, especially in its treatment of "minorities," or non-German and non-Hungarian national groups. By extension, Švejk and K., both of whom bear the middle, or minor, name of Emperor Franz Josef, signify the Czech and, less obviously, Jewish minorities in Prague at the turn of the last century respectively. Although the status of minorities was ostensibly protected under the Dual Monarchy, Germans, Czechs and Jews met on unequal terms as the German hegemony felt increasingly threatened by the rise of Czech nationalism.

Like the German-Jewish-Bohemian-Austrian Kafka, the Czech nationalist Hašek experienced difficulty negotiating what Scott Spector identifies as Prague's "territories," the multiple geographic, linguistic and national terrains of the Habsburg-dominated area.[4] In their seminal work on Kafka, *Towards a Minor Literature,* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari postulate three characteristics of minor literature, namely "the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation."[5] Both Kafka and Hašek were members of minor national groups, and both exposed absurdities inherent in the Austro-Hungarian system through their writing, but can both *The Trial* and ***The Good Soldier Švejk*** be considered examples of minor literature? A close examination of the biographies and texts of the two authors in terms of their portrayals of representatives of legal authorities (police officers, guards, and soldiers) may shed light on this question.

According to Hans Peter Hye in *Das politische System in der Habsburger Monarchie,* paradox was inevitable in an empire that asserted unity among the multiple lands, nations, beliefs, and political traditions that had developed in both Austria and Hungary over centuries.[6] As the author of an article from *The Times* of August 31, 1897 remarked, the

> Dual Monarchy is a paradox which defies explanation by any political theory accepted among men . . . In most political systems some dominant idea or some paramount force may be found round which other things may be grouped more or less logically and satisfactorily . . . But in the Dual Monarchy everything is uncertain, everything is fluctuating, and every rule perpetually overwhelmed by exceptions.[7]

The very different political histories of the two relatively independent "halves" of the empire led even to disparate constitutional developments in the western and eastern regions[8] after the Compromise of 1867. Yet, the Habsburg regime maintained a myth of universality not only in a political sense, but also ideologically in what Endre Kiss in *Der Tod der K.U.K. Weltordnung in Wien* calls "ein einheitliches Weltbild" (a unified world view).[9] The reality was, however, a confusing muddle of nations and beliefs, the resulting unrest of which ultimately led to the First World War and the end of Austria-Hungary.

The government's attitude to its multiple national groups was particularly disordered in Bohemia. Hye notes:

> Eine besondere Spezialität des böhmischen Landtags war wohl die große Schwierigkeit, einen Konsens zwischen den beiden sich immer mehr polarisierenden, sozial aber ebenbürtigen nationalen Lagern zu erzielen . . . Absenz und Obstruktion prägten daher im böhmischen Landtag über lange Jahre"
>
> (a particular specialty of the Bohemian parliament was certainly the great difficulty in achieving agreement between both increasingly more polarized but socially equal national camps . . . absence and obstruction thus left their marks in the Bohemian parliament over many years).[10]

Tension between these two groups, the privileged Germans and the "awakened" Czechs, affected the third group, the Jews, whose political status as a "nation" was less clear than that of the Czechs. Anna Tavis records that "Prague's outward cultural stagnation concealed the deepening social rifts among the three ethnic groups: the Germans, desperately clinging to their privileges; the Czechs, clamoring for cultural recognition and political representation; and the Jewish minority, struggling to survive in the political crossfire between the Germans and the Czechs."[11] At best, Czechs identified Jews with their German adversaries,[12] while German nationalists tended to invoke an exclusively Germanic heritage.

Before postulating a virtual meeting between Švejk and K., Karel Kosik asks, "What kind of Prague is Kafka's Prague, and what is the Prague of Hašek?"[13] Kosik here acknowledges both similarities and differences in the two authors' portrayals of Prague's shifting terrain at the turn of the last century,[14] specifically in ***Švejk*** [***The Good Soldier Švejk***] and *The Trial.* While Hašek and Kafka moved through the same physical and temporal space, their experiences and consequently their literary reconstructions of Prague were quite different. Because, as Spector argues, spatial metaphors are useful for periods of cultural upheaval,[15] a glance at the physical and biographical surroundings of each author may provide insight into their works.

Jaroslav Hašek was born April 30, 1883 at 16 Školská street in the working class area of New Town, southwest of Wenceslas square, a prominent center of Czech nationalist identification. Hašek's father was a schoolmaster, his family poor but educated Czechs who belonged to the generation inspired by the so-called "national awakening" to work towards self-rule. He was left without parental direction at an early age, for his mother seemed unable to provide guidance after his father drank himself to death. Street urchin turned political rebel, Jaroslav Hašek wrote satirical short stories and political articles for local Czech newspapers, and dabbled in Czech anarchist activity, but soon became tired of the earnestness of Czech nationalists. He ran for public office in 1911 as a mock candidate of his own "Party for Moderate Progress Within the Limits of the Law."

> "The meetings, at which he made witty impromptu speeches, were held in a pub, and the manifesto contained such proposals as the nationalisation of concierges and the 'rehabilitation of animals' . . . Hašek then wrote a mock-serious History of the party which was so full of slanderous remarks" that it was not published until after the author's death.[16]
>
> [***The Bachura Scandal and other Stories and Sketches***]

He married in 1910, but he soon chose to live away from his wife, although a son, Richard, was born in 1912.

Hašek spent most of the war years in a Russian army camp, then in the Czech Legion, and finally joined the Bolsheviks in 1917. While rising to prominence in the Russian Communist party, he married a second wife in Russia, although he had never divorced his first. Eventually he returned to Prague and the new Czechoslovak state in his bigamist second marriage, where he continued work begun before the war on a six-volume novel about an unruly Czech soldier named Švejk. He completed only four volumes, for, following in his father's footsteps, the outrageous carouser "excessed" himself to death[17] in 1923.

In *Prague Territories,* Scott Spector brilliantly maps out the terrain into which Franz Josef Kafka was born just two months after Hašek, on July 3, 1883 at the corner of Maiselgasse and Karpfgasse (today Maiselov and Kaprov) on the border between the Jewish quarter of Josefstadt (Josefov) and Old Town Square. Josefstadt was named for Kaiser Josef (1740-1790), "who granted the Bohemian Jews a number of basic liberties."[18] Like many upwardly mobile Jews in Prague, Kafka's family moved away from Josefstadt shortly before the narrow, dark, dirty streets of this mostly German- and Yiddish-speaking Jewish ghetto were razed in the so-called "sanitizing" movement of the 1890's, during which "the labyrinth of medieval dwellings was replaced with large, elegant apartment buildings along wide boulevards."[19]

Kafka's sense of impermanence in his physical environment was compounded by the complexity of his emotional relationships with his parents and resentment toward his Austro-Hungarian "Vaterland." He felt alienated from his mother tongue, German, and lamented the fact that he could not speak Yiddish, which belonged to the terrain of eastern European Jews, the only "authentic" Jews in Europe, according to Kafka, since western Jews, he believed, were "dissociated from family and traditions."[20] Although engaged a few times, Kafka never married, fearful that a middle-class life would leave him without enough time to write.

Time and time again, Kafka sought to escape Prague, but he never succeeded, as Hašek had, not even to be called away to service during the war years, since his job at the Bohemian Workers' Accident Insurance Company was designated "indispensable." This same job exposed Kafka to the kind of legal double-speak and internalized guilt and powerlessness of the individual that are central problems of *The Trial.* He only succeeded in leaving Prague when his health declined, and he battled tuberculosis during the last years of his life, finally succumbing to it in 1924.

Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* and Kafka's *The Trial*

In part because Hašek and Kafka each experienced Habsburg Prague as a member of a marginalized national group, both ***The Good Soldier Švejk*** and *The Trial* expose certain absurdities within the Austro-Hungarian bureaucracy. The obvious situational differences—the civil arrest of K., a bank clerk, for example, stands in contrast to the military environment of ***Švejk,*** a dog-breeder turned unwilling soldier—point to dissimilarities also in the kind of humor and method of criticism indicated in the texts. Already in the first paragraphs, the many similar elements are outweighed by a difference of tone and perspective. Hašek's novel opens with a leisurely domestic scene:

> "'And so they've killed our Ferdinand,' said the charwoman to Mr. Švejk, who had left military service years before, after having been finally certified by an

army medical board as an imbecile, and now lived by selling dogs—ugly, mongrel monstrosities whose pedigrees he forged.

Apart from this occupation he suffered from rheumatism and was at this very moment rubbing his knees with Elliman's embrocation.

'Which Ferdinand, Mrs. Müller?' he asked, going on with the massaging. 'I know two Ferdinands. One is a messenger at Průša's, the chemist's, and once by mistake he drank a bottle of hair oil there. And the other is Ferdinand Kokoška who collects dog manure. Neither of them is any loss.'

'Oh no, sir, it's His Imperial Highness, the Archduke Ferdinand, from Konopiště, the fat churchy one.'"[21]

The reference to the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand immediately establishes a specific time and place for the novel, but the conversational tone of the charwoman neutralizes any anxiety, for this private sphere is hardly distressed by the political world. Even the domestic trouble of rheumatism receives its balm as local citizens take precedence in the main character's consciousness over world leaders. The Archduke is associated with messenger boys and dog manure, and it is implied that his death is no loss, while the comically unflattering information unnecessarily used to identify him equalizes common folk and aristocracy.

In general, there is a casual disregard for administrators in Hašek's work that is the antithesis of Kafka's apprehension toward the same. Like ***Švejk,*** *The Trial* opens with a domestic scene, but it is anything but comfortably removed from bureaucratic penetration and the public eye:

"Someone must have traduced Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong, he was arrested one fine morning. His landlady's cook, who always brought him his breakfast at eight o'clock, failed to appear on this occasion. That had never happened before. K. waited for a little while longer, watching from his pillow the old lady opposite, who seemed to be peering at him with a curiosity unusual even for her, but then, feeling both put out and hungry, he rang the bell. At once there was a knock at the door and a man entered whom he had never seen before in the house."[22]

The arrest theme appears immediately in the first sentence, obviating any possibility of contentment, and the break in the normal breakfast routine signals an upset in the domestic sphere for which there is no balm like that in Hašek's world. As the counterpart to ***Švejk***'s chatty serving woman, K.'s landlady's cook not only "fails to appear," but is replaced with the silent, prying eye of a neighbor woman. There are no time and place indicators as in ***Švejk,*** and the resulting alienation is intensified by a disturbing lack of surnames, indeed names in general, so unlike the comic formality of address in Hašek's novel.

Josef K.'s unease is augmented by the penetration of the unfamiliar, official world into his private apartment, for he has none of Švejk's disrespectful attitude toward a comfortably distant bureaucracy. Even when Švejk moves into the public sphere just after the opening scene and encounters an authority figure in the policeman Bretschneider, it is in the relative ease of a neighborhood bar, where the bartender rather than he himself is initially the focus of interrogation:

"'Well, it's a glorious summer!' said Bretschneider, embarking on his serious conversation.

'Shit on everything!' answered Palivec, putting the glasses away into a cupboard.

'It's a fine thing they've done to us at Sarajevo,' said Bretschneider with a faint hope.

'Which Sarajevo?' asked Palivec. 'Do you mean the wine cellar at Nusle? They're always fighting there, you know. Of course it's Nusle.'

'At Sarajevo in Bosnia, Mr. Palivec. They've just shot His Imperial Highness, the Archduke Ferdinand, there. What do you say to that?'

'I don't poke my nose into things like that. They can kiss my arse if I do!' Palivec replied politely, lighting his pipe. 'Nowadays, if anyone got mixed up in a business like that, he'd risk breaking his neck. I'm a tradesman and when anyone comes in here and orders a beer I fill up his glass. But Sarajevo, politics or the late lamented Archduke are nothing for people like us. They lead straight to Pankrác [the Prague prison].'

Bretschneider lapsed into silence and looked disappointingly round the empty pub.

'Hallo, there used to be a picture of His Imperial Majesty hanging here once,' he started up again after a while. 'Just where the mirror hangs now.'

'Yes, you're right,' Palivec replied. 'It did hang there, but the flies used to shit on it, so I put it away in the attic. You know, somebody might be so free as to pass a remark about it and then there could be unpleasantness. I don't want that, do I?'"

(Hašek, 6-8)

As a member of a national minority, the Czech bartender Palivec is conscious of his language in ways that Bretschneider cannot be, and is thus able to best the officer. Ever the trickster, Hašek bends and subverts his malleable mother tongue, using crudity to shock and amuse, while undermining the tradition of fine literature and the *authority* of the author with what Peter Steiner calls "semiotic self-defense."[23] The Prague Hašek portrays in this passage is a dichotomous space divided between German and Czech, symbolized by the treatment of the Emperor's portrait. The Czech knows he cannot openly express his disdain for the loaded object to the German authority, so he couches his criticism in the affected foolishness that the Czechs have claimed, in Švejk's name, as national resistance first to the Habsburgs, then the Nazis, and finally the communist regime.

In *The Trial,* however, Josef K. falls prey to the same bureaucratic language that Švejk and Palivec manipulate with such ease. In the interview with an authority

figure that follows Kafka's opening scene, K., too, moves away from his private room, but not of his own free will, and not into a relaxed public space; rather, public and private spheres merge most uncomfortably in the apartment of K.'s neighbor, Fräulein Bürstner:

> . . . Now the night table beside her bed had been pushed into the middle of the floor to serve as a desk, and the Inspector was sitting behind it. He had crossed his legs, and one arm was resting on the back of the chair . . . 'Josef K.?' asked the Inspector, perhaps merely to draw K.'s roving glance upon himself. K. nodded. 'You are presumably very much surprised at the events of this morning?' asked the Inspector, with both hands rearranging the few things that lay on the night table, a candle and a matchbox, a book and a pincushion, as if they were objects which he required for his interrogation. 'Certainly,' said K., and he was filled with pleasure at having encountered a sensible man at last, with whom he could discuss the matter. 'Certainly, I am surprised, but I am by no means very much surprised.' 'Not very much surprised?' asked the Inspector, setting the candle in the middle of the table and then grouping the other things round it. 'Perhaps you misunderstand me,' K. hastened to add."
>
> (Kafka, 15)

K.'s interrogator is completely in control of both the situation and the information. He does not, like Bretschneider, ineptly attempt to lead the subject toward self-incrimination, but expertly directs K. to question himself. Far from seeking to confuse the authorities, K. is distressed by the possibility of a misunderstanding, as he assumes, unlike Palivec, that he is dealing with "a sensible man."

The Inspector's terseness draws K.'s attention to the objects in the room, which are curiously disconnected from the situational context. While it is the very absence of the loaded object (the Emperor's portrait) in ***Švejk*** that draws attention to it, the objects in the *Trial* are disturbingly present, in spite of their apparent meaninglessness as empty signifiers. Kafka also uses portraits as loaded objects,[24] but K.'s focus in this passage is on insignificant household items that are transformed into potential apparati of torture by fire, penetration, and, most powerfully, the (legal) book. The book is not open, however, for, according to Kiss, "Josef K. . . . wird in eine Welt hineingeworfen, deren Gesetze von jedem eingehalten werden, ohne daß sie klar und öffentlich artikuliert wären" (Josef K. . . . is thrown into a world whose laws are followed by everyone without being clearly and publicly articulated).[25] Throughout the novel, especially in the interrogations of K. and the famous parable "Before the Law" told by the priest "In the Cathedral" (Kafka, 267-269), the individual wages a self-absorbed battle with the legal system, seeking order not only in the political world, but also the existential, the religious, and the metaphysical.[26] In eschewing time and place signifiers and extending his novel beyond the Jewish situation in Austria-Hungary, Kafka transcends the particular, for "Kafkas Welt [im *Prozeß*] reproduziert die Struktur einer Weltordnung auch 'von oben'" (Kafka's world [in *The Trial*] reproduces the structure of a world order also "from above").[27]

Because there are no clear laws, boundaries, or specificity of setting in Kafka's literary world, there is no concrete connection to Kafka's social environment. In other words, while Švejk is clearly Czech, K. is not obviously Jewish. Unlike Švejk, who is certain of his inferior status under the law, and continually commits offenses but avoids being arrested, Josef K. initially believes in his own innocence, the laws of his country, and his elevated status under the constitution: "K. lived in a country with a legal constitution, there was universal peace, all the laws were in force; who dared seize him in his own dwelling?" (Kafka, 7). K. gives credence to a constitution that assures the equality of all, but discovers that, in spite of his "German" self-importance, his deepest fear is realized, and he is treated like a Jew, for in Austria, as in Orwell, some are more equal than others.

Yet, Kafka still avoids specific nationalist reference also in his "Darstellung eines Helden, der—streng unreflektiert!—den Kampf gegen diese Ordnung der Welt vehement . . . aufnimmt" (portrayal of a hero who—strictly unreflectively—vehemently takes up the battle against this order of the world).[28] K.'s lack of self-reflection prevents him from accepting moral responsibility for his life even as he continues to seek approval from external authority. During his interrogation, K. asserts,

> ". . . though I am accused of something, I cannot recall the slightest offense that might be charged against me. But that even is of minor importance, the real question is, who accuses me? What authority is conducting these proceedings? Are you officers of the law? None of you has a uniform . . ."
>
> (Kafka, 16)

While Bretschneider wears a uniform that symbolizes an authority that Palivec thwarts, the Inspector wears no uniform; nevertheless, K. respects the Inspector's authority because he mistakenly believes it will release him from his own guilt. Ironically, it is this very refusal to accept responsibility for his life that is K.'s crime; the Inspector responds to K.'s questions with: "think less about us and of what is going to happen to you, think more about yourself instead" (Kafka, 17). In directing K. toward self-reflection, the Inspector not only provides a broader psychological space for interpretation of the novel, but he also turns responsibility back onto the individual. Precisely because he refuses to examine himself and admit his (German-Jewish,[29] but also more broadly human) self-doubt, K. must perish.

In the final scene of *The Trial,* after the trio have left Kosik's virtual encounter on the Charles Bridge and made their way up to the Strahov quarries (of course,

neither place is explicitly named), the two guards politely prepare K. for his death by propping him against a boulder and drawing out a knife:

> "K. now perceived clearly that he was supposed to seize the knife himself, as it traveled from hand to hand above him, and plunge it into his own breast. But he did not do so, he merely turned his head, which was still free to move, and gazed around him . . . His glance fell on the top story of the house adjoining the quarry. With a flicker as of a light going up, the casements of a window there suddenly flew open; a human figure . . . leaned abruptly far forward and stretched both arms still farther. Who was it? A friend? A good man? Someone who sympathized? Someone who wanted to help? . . . Were there arguments in his favor that had been overlooked? Of course there must be. Logic is doubtless unshakable, but it cannot withstand a man who wants to go on living. Where was the Judge whom he had never seen? Where was the High Court, to which he had never penetrated? He raised his hands and spread out all his fingers.
>
> But the hands of one of the partners were already at K.'s throat, while the other thrust the knife deep into his heart and turned it there twice. With failing eyes, K. could still see the two of them immediately before him, cheek leaning against cheek, watching the final act. 'Like a dog!' he said; it was as if the shame of it must outlive him."
>
> (Kafka, 285-286)

Even in the last moments of his life, K. refuses to accept responsibility for his own life and death. He not only continues to look for help outside of himself, in an imagined "friend," "good man," or someone who sympathizes, he still blames "the Judge whom he had never seen" for his "apprehension" and condemnation. Indeed, it is the shame of his death rather than the fact of it that seems to bother him the most.

Interestingly, K. equates his death with that of a dog, a motif Peter Steiner discusses in "*Tropos Kynikos,* Jaroslav Hašek's ***The Good Soldier Švejk.***" Steiner counters Kosik's argument that Kafka and Hašek are welded together, like "Siamese twins breech delivered from the same womb"[30] by comparing the novels "in an antistrophic manner" from *The Trial*'s "Like a dog!" ending to the opening of ***Švejk*** with a former soldier turned dog breeder. It is the "linkage of shame with a canine that distances Kafka from Hašek"[31] argues Steiner, who associates Hašek's discursive strategies and indirect challenge to authority with the Greek kynic philosopher Diogenes of Sinope through the adjectival form of dog, *kyon.*[32] While there is no boundary between K.'s external and internal "apprehension" by the law, Švejk refuses to internalize his guilt. In fact, he uses the very system that binds K. to achieve his freedom. Like Kafka's character, Hašek's hero is arrested near the end of his novel, but Švejk's motley escort hardly poses the same threat as K.'s:

The following document accompanied Švejk to the brigade:

> "In accordance with instructions contained in telegram number 469 the infantryman Josef Švejk, a deserter from the 11th march company, is forwarded to the brigade staff for further action.
>
> The escort itself, which consisted of four men, was a medley of nationalities. It was made up of a Pole, a Hungarian, a German and a Czech. The last-named, who had the rank of a corporal and led the escort, tried to show his importance towards the prisoner who was his fellow-countryman by letting him feel his frightful superiority. When, for instance, Švejk expressed the wish at the station that he might be permitted to urinate, the corporal told him quite rudely that he could urinate when he came to the brigade.
>
> 'Very well,' said Švejk, 'You'll have to give me that in writing, so that when my bladder bursts it is established who is responsible for it. There is a law about that, corporal.'
>
> The corporal, who was a simple cowman, was frightened by the word bladder and so the whole escort ceremoniously led Švejk to the W.C. on the station.
>
> There was very little fun in the escort altogether. The Hungarian talked with the German in a peculiar way, because the only words he knew in German were *Jawohl* and *Was*? When the German explained something to him, the Hungarian nodded his head and said, '*Jawohl,*' and when the German stopped talking the Hungarian said: '*Was*?' and the German started again."
>
> (Hašek, 717-718)

Unlike K., who never discovers the particulars of his trial, Švejk is fully aware of the charges against him, which accompany him in a document to his farcical court martial. Like the Habsburg empire, Švejk's escort is a "medley of nationalities" in which each struggles to show his "frightful superiority" over the other. The absence of unity in diversity under the Dual Monarchy leads to uncertainty about the laws (so that Švejk can "cow" his adversary with his "bladder" of fabricated knowledge), and to lack of communication even between the two kingdoms, for the Hungarians in ***Švejk*** are mere aye-sayers to the verbose decrees of the German hegemony. In turn, the authoritative Austrians are constrained by their adherance to the same hierarchichal system that frees Kafka's officials to become psychological tormenters, and, in the end, Švejk is cleared of all charges and sent back to his company (Hašek, 724).

With its unambiguous nationalist identification and easy, satirical style, Hašek's novel can be interpreted as more superficial than Kafka's, for, if ***The Good Soldier Švejk*** is unmistakably directed at the Austro-Hungarian regime, *The Trial* more generally criticizes the absurdity of any rigid bureaucracy in a changing and uncertain world. Yet, asks Kosik, "isn't this naturalness and transparence only illusory, and in this sense deceitfully misleading?"[33] "Kafka's man," he argues, "is condemned to live in a world in which the only human dignity is confined to the interpretation of that world . . . And Hašek, through his own work, shows that man, even when

treated as an object, is still man."[34] In the very name of the title character we can see contempt for the Austrian officers who were probably always shouting at the unruly Hašek to be quiet, or "schweig," in German. In fact, Švejk, like Hašek never does "schweig," and the very writing of the novel is a challenge to the order to remain quiet about unacceptable politics.

With their overtly problematized political environments, ***Švejk*** and *The Trial* undoubtedly demonstrate the second characteristic of minor literature, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy. Perhaps, too, both novels display the third characteristic, the collective assemblage of enunciation, in that they seem to speak on behalf of a Czech (***Švejk***) or more broadly human (*The Trial*) collective. Yet, while both Kafka and Hašek clearly disturb the authority of the Habsburg legal system in their satirical portrayals of guards, soldiers, and the like, Hašek's novel falls short of Deleuze and Guattari's category of "minor literature." It is in the first characteristic, the deterritorialization of language, that ***Švejk*** differs from *The Trial.* In fact, as it was written in Czech rather than German, it cannot even be considered in Deleuze and Guattari's category, since a "minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language."[35]

But it is not merely the language of the author that perhaps disqualifies Hašek's work as minor literature, for there is a sanctuary space in Hašek's text for those "in the know," a comfort zone that Kafka does not provide in his "deterritorialized"[36] writing. His characters intentionally take speech literally for comic effect and use crudities to shock and obscure a meaning that is, nevertheless, always clear to the reader. While Josef Švejk is able to evade public authority through this "ludic play,"[37] Josef K. is ultimately convicted by his "criminal apprehension," his guilty conscience in the inhuman system. Certainly the experiences of Kafka and Hašek in terms of national identity led to very different perceptions and portrayals of government and law. Although Czechs and Jews were both marginalized in German-dominated Prague, the status of Czechs as a minority group was much less ambiguous than that of the Jews. Furthermore, the rebellious Hašek suddenly became a member of the Prague status quo after the war, but Kafka, as a German Jew, found himself doubly marginalized in the new Czechoslovak state. Because the triumph of Hašek's Czech nationalism excluded Kafka's German Jewish community, while they moved through the same physical space in Prague at the same time, meeting each other was, indeed, impossible.

Notes

1. Hašek completed four of the intended six volumes of *Švejk* between 1921 and 1923, or from the time he returned to Prague after the war until his death.
2. According to Max Brod, he obtained the disordered manuscript in 1920 and "immediately put it in order." From Max Brod's postscript to Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 334.
3. Karel Kosik, "Hašek and Kafka: 1883-1922/23," transl. Ann Hopkins, *Cross Currents* 1 (1983), 127.
4. Scott Spector, *Prague Territories. National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000), ix.
5. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature,* trans. Dana Polan, Theory of History and Literature 30 (Minneapolis: U of MN, 1986), 18.
6. Hye notes: "Innerhalb der 17 österreichischen und drei bzw. zwei ungarischen Länder, auf deren Vielfalt in vielerlei Beziehung nicht eigens hingewiesen werden muß, standen zumindest 16 Nationalitäten, sei es als 'alte, historische,' sei es als 'junge,' das eigenen Bewußtsein gerade formierende, in Beziehung und Konflikt. Auf diesem Gebiet waren gleichzeitig zumindest elf Konfessionen und Religionsgemeinschaften anerkannt." (Within the 17 Austrian and three or four Hungarian lands, to whose multiplicity in many respects it is not necessary to refer, at least 16 nationalities (whether they be "old, historic" or "young" and just in the process of forming their own consciousness) stood in relationship and conflict. In this region, at the same time, at least eleven faiths and religious societies were recognized.) From Hans Peter Hye, *Das politische System in der Habsburgermonarchie,* (Prague: Karolinium, 1998), 14-15.
7. Cited in Hye, 13.
8. Hye, 24.
9. Endre Kiss, *Der Tod der K.U.K. Weltordnung in Wien,* Forschung zur Geschichte des Donauraumes 8 (Wien: Hermann Böhlaus, 1986), 217.
10. Hye, 169.
11. Anna A. Tavis, *Rilke's Russia* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1994), 6.
12. "Siegfried Kapper's efforts towards Czech-Jewish symbiosis were soundly squelched by Czech nationalist Karel Havliček, who argued: 'Undoubtedly all Jews—whatever country or part of the world they may live in—consider themselves as a nation, as brethren, and not solely as co-religionists. We hope that there is no need to prove the point that it is impossible to belong simultaneously to two fatherlands and two nations, or serve two masters. Therefore anyone who wants to be a Czech must cease to be a Jew' . . . In conclusion, somewhat inconsistently, Havliček said that if Jews must abandon their 'natural' lan-

guage, Hebrew, then they should 'attach themselves to the Germans and their literature,' since German had already become the second mother tongue of the Central European Jews." From Hugh Agnew, "Czechs, Germans, Bohemians?" *Creating the Other in Central Europe* Conference, (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, 7 May 1999), 14.

13. Kosik, 127.

14. Kosik is by no means the only scholar of the last thirty years to compare Hašek and Kafka. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz's "Kafka and Hašek—Reflections on a Meeting in the House of Fiction" (1984) and Willy Prochazka's "Kafka's Association with Jaroslav Hašek and the Czech Anarchists" (1978), for example, explore the possibilities and probabilities of a physical meeting between the two authors. There are many connections between the two, including life span; both were born within three months of each other in 1883, and they died within a year of one another, Hašek in 1923 and Kafka in 1924. Both rejected traditional married life in favor of their writing, and both challenged Austrian rule of Prague through their writing. More interesting, however, are the theoretical differences between the two authors in their literary constructions of Prague's physical and social environment.

15. Spector, x.

16. From Alan Menhennet's introduction to Jaroslav Hašek, *The Bachura Scandal and other Stories and Sketches,* trans. Alan Menhennet (London: Angel 1991), 9.

17. From Cecil Parrot's introduction to Jaroslav Hašek, *The Good Soldier Švejk and His Fortunes in the World War,* transl. Cecil Parrot (London: Penguin, 1973), xiv.

18. Jan Kaplan and Krystyna Nosarzewska, *Prague. The Turbulent Century* (Cologne: Könemann, 1997), 69.

19. Kaplan and Nosarzewska, 73.

20. Ronald Gestwicki, *A Life Study of Franz Kafka (1883-1924)* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2000), 81.

21. Jaroslav Hašek, *The Good Soldier Švejk and His Fortunes in the World War,* transl. Cecil Parrot (London: Penguin, 1973), 3. All further references to this work will be inserted parenthetically into the text as Hašek with appropriate page number.

22. Franz Kafka, *The Trial,* transl. Willa & Edwin Muir (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 3-4. All further references to this work will be inserted parenthetically into the text as Kafka with appropriate page number.

23. Peter Steiner, "*Tropos Kynikos*: Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk,*" *Poetics Today* 19:4 (Winter 1998), 470.

24. Deleuze and Guattari comment on the "proliferation of photos and portraits in *The Trial* from Fraulein Burstner's room to Titorelli's studio," which they see as "neutralized desire." Deleuze and Guattari, 3-5.

25. Kiss, 218.

26. Kiss, 218.

27. Kiss, 217.

28. Kiss, 217.

29. For more discussion on the "bifurcated soul" of the German-Jew, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999).

30. Steiner, 470.

31. Steiner, 472.

32. Steiner, 469.

33. Kosík, 128.

34. Kosík, 136.

35. Deleuze and Guattari, 16.

36. Deleuze and Guattari, 4.

37. Steiner, 469.

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Identifies "several linguistic and linguo-stylistic features" of Hašek's novel *The Good Soldier Schweik* "that bring forth more or less serious translation problems or that, at least, should not be overlooked, dismissed or neglected in the process of translation."

Parrott, Cecil. *Jaroslav Hašek: A Study of* Švejk *and the Short Stories,* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 219 p.

Offers an account of Hašek's life and historical background then surveys his journalism, short fiction, and his major novel, *The Good Soldier Schweik.*

Steiner, Peter. "*Tropos Kynikos*: Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk.*" *Poetics Today* 19, no. 4 (winter 1998): 469-98.

Compares "the discursive strategies" of Schweik and those of the Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, noting how both men use "ludic play" to indirectly subvert authority but adding, in reference to H. P. Grice's theory of conversation, that while Diogenes openly flouts conversational maxims, Hašek's hero does this "surreptitiously," such that his interlocutors wonder if he has a mental disorder, rather than intentionally seeking to sabotage verbal exchange.

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Ayn Rand
1905-1982

(Born Alissa Zinovievna Rosenbaum) Russian-born American novelist, essayist, philosopher, and playwright.

The following entry provides an overview of Rand's life and works. For additional information on her career, see *CLC,* Volumes 3, 30, 44, and 79.

INTRODUCTION

Rand is a Russian-born American novelist, playwright, and essayist primarily remembered for her controversial novels *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), works that convey her idiosyncratic vision of egoism, reason, and unfettered individualism as the foundation of a moral life. She is also recognized as the founder of Objectivism, a school of philosophy that emphasizes rational self-interest, limited government, laissez-faire capitalism, and ethical behavior based on action and reason. In her essays and fiction, Rand staunchly opposed altruism and all forms of collectivism, including fascism, communism, and socialism, advocating instead an ethical egoism and privileging the rights of the individual. She championed the primacy of reason in her philosophical writings and defended the idea that happiness is the moral purpose of the heroic individual. While critical response to Rand's work has been sharply divided, the author remains an influential figure in American history, whose ideas informed a variety of disciplines, from morality and aesthetics to politics and economics during the latter half of the twentieth century. Writing in 1984, J. Charles King maintained that "there is no doubt that Ayn Rand's novels and philosophical writings have played an extremely important role" in the "resurgence of individualist and libertarian thought in the United States," adding that for some, "she has provided the main thrust of a philosophical justification for the advocacy of liberty and individualism."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Rand was born Alissa Zinovievna Rosenbaum on February 2, 1905, in St. Petersburg, Russia, to Jewish middle-class parents, Anna and Zinovy Rosenbaum. The author read widely during her youth, particularly works by Friedrich Nietzsche, Victor Hugo, and Maurice Champagne, and by the age of eight had decided that she wanted to be a writer. Rand was a supporter of the February Revolution of 1917 but opposed the Bolshevik Revolution of October of that year, and after her father's business was nationalized, the family fled to Crimea in a futile attempt to escape Soviet communism. They returned to Russia in 1921, and Rand attended the University of Petrograd, graduating with honors in history in 1924. The author escaped to the United States in 1926 to pursue her literary career and officially changed her name to Ayn Rand. She settled in Hollywood and worked as a waitress, movie extra, and wardrobe clerk in order to support herself. During this time, Rand met the actor Frank O'Connor, and they were married in 1929. The marriage enabled her to become an American citizen, and she was naturalized in 1931. In 1934, Rand and O'Connor moved to New York City in anticipation of the Broadway production of Rand's first play, *Night of January 16th* (1935), which had premiered in Los Angeles in 1934 under the title *Woman on Trial.* Her first two novels, *We the Living* (1936) and *Anthem* (1938), were also written and published during the 1930s. After the publication of *The Fountainhead* in 1943, Rand achieved wide recognition and financial independence. She returned to California and devoted herself to writing full time.

During the 1940s, Rand began work on her next novel, *Atlas Shrugged,* which took more than a decade to complete. For many critics, the work became the culminating fictional statement of her Objectivist philosophy. After its publication in 1957, Rand turned from fiction to writing only essays and philosophical tracts. In 1951, she and her husband once again moved to New York, where the author developed a cult-like following as the leader of the Objectivist movement. In 1962, along with the writer and psychotherapist Nathaniel Branden, Rand founded *The Objectivist Newsletter,* later shortened to *The Objectivist,* in which the author published numerous essays and cultivated an even larger audience. Many of these essays were later republished in collections, including *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964); *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (1966); *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology* (1967); *The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution* (1971); and the posthumous work, *Philosophy: Who Needs It?* (1982). In 1968, the Objectivist movement was fractured, when Rand quarreled with her chief disciples, Branden and his wife, Barbara, over her ongoing affair with Branden. After the break up, Rand continued to publish essays in a new periodical, *The*

Ayn Rand Letter, but failed to produce additional longer works. During the 1970s, the author's health and literary career deteriorated considerably. Rand died of lung cancer on March 6, 1982, in New York City.

MAJOR WORKS

According to many scholars, Rand's novels represent distinct stages in the development of her evolving philosophical system. Her first novel, *We the Living,* is considered an attack on Soviet communism but more generally expresses the author's opposition to any collective and repressive system. In this work, Rand explores the effects of state-enforced collectivism on the lives of individuals, focusing on the disillusionment and psychological ruin characters experience as a result of the Soviet regime. Her next work, *Anthem,* contrasts two imaginary societies: a collectivist state and a community founded on individualist ideals. Rand reverses the conventional ideals espoused in utopian literature, however, depicting stagnation and cruelty as the consequences of a collectivist utopia, while portraying progress, freedom, and voluntary cooperation as the products of a society founded on egoism. The author's breakthrough book, *The Fountainhead,* offers a more thorough exploration of the cultural and psychological features of individualism and collectivism and promotes, among other ideals, a laissez-faire economic system and a limited government role in the lives of individuals. In this work, Rand depicts the independent, creative mind as the "fountainhead" of human progress, as well as the source of all that is good in society. The protagonist of the novel, Howard Roark, is a gifted architect and individualist, who is so committed to his ideals that he sabotages his own housing project after someone tampers with the design. Brought to trial, Roark defends his position, arguing for the absolute rights of the individual with regard to time, energy, talent, and labor, and is eventually acquitted. Other characters in the novel exemplify contrasting cultural, ethical, and psychological positions. Often consumed by their preoccupation with others, these figures eventually succumb to anxiety, power, or the lure of public opinion, and sacrifice their potential in the process. Exploitation and altruism are presented in opposition to individualism in the novel, as both represent, for Rand, a choice to sacrifice oneself to the needs or desires of others. In her last novel, *Atlas Shrugged,* Rand expands on themes from her previous works, presenting the argument that civilization will collapse without the support of free and creative individuals. The novel presents Rand's most comprehensive treatment of her Objectivist philosophy, which is founded on the idea that reality is an objective, not subjective, phenomenon (summarized in the author's axiom "existence exists"). *Atlas Shrugged* depicts a group of artists, financiers, industrialists, and scientists, led by protagonist John Galt, who withdraw from the increasingly collectivist American society and found an individualist utopian community in the Rocky Mountains, where they are able to escape exploitation and live freely. Their strike results in the collapse of the American economic and social system, and they eventually reemerge and reconstruct society according to their own ideals of individual achievement, self-esteem, limited-government, and laissez-faire capitalist principles. Rand presents her views on ethics, politics, history, economics, psychology, metaphysics, and epistemology through her exploration of the moral and psychological conflicts experienced by the individualists as they strive to establish their utopia, and her philosophy is reiterated in one of the best-known sections of the novel—a sixty-page speech delivered by Galt in his radio address to the American public. Rand also presents a moral system in the book, which promotes the idea that virtue is the result of focused, noncontradictory thinking, or "volitional consciousness," while evil derives from moral uncertainty and the failure of the individual to develop his or her full capacity for reason and self-knowledge. *Atlas Shrugged* also features Rand's version of the "ideal woman," Dagny Taggart, an executive of Taggart Transcontinental Railroad, who runs the company and lives her life according to Rand's concept of the creative, free, and self-interested individual. Taggart, with her lover and fellow capitalist, Hank Rearden, eventually solve the mystery of the unexplained disappearance of America's greatest minds and join Galt at the end of the novel in his mountain hideaway.

In addition to novels, Rand produced several significant works of nonfiction, which collect her major Objectivist philosophical essays. *The Virtue of Selfishness* is comprised of essays by Rand and Nathaniel Branden, many of which originally appeared in the *The Objectivist Newsletter.* The essays address ethical topics from the Objectivist perspective, including a description and defense of egoism as a rational code of ethics, the negative consequences of altruism, and the author's guidelines for proper government. Rand's political philosophy, as outlined in the collection, is based on humankind's natural right to life, which, the author contends, implies a natural right to property. Rand privileges minimal government in the volume, asserting that it should exist primarily to defend the individual's right to be left alone, and that it should include only an army, a police force, and courts of law for the settlement of disputes. *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal,* which comprises essays by Rand, Branden, Robert Hessen, and Alan Greenspan, focuses on the virtue of laissez-faire capitalism. In addition to outlining the theory and history of capitalism, the collection includes essays that address contemporary political issues of the 1960s, including student protests and the Vietnam War. In *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,* Rand attempts to establish an epistemological basis for her philosophical

system. The author provides an analysis of thinking in the work, focusing on concepts, or the products of "volitional consciousness." For Rand, concepts are not merely the result of an arbitrary subjective process but are "objective" or "mental integrations of factual data computed by man." Rand also discusses the hierarchical nature of knowledge in the work, as well as the nature of definitions, and argues that logic, rather than subjectivity, makes every mind an "ultimate authority" on truth.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Although Rand wrote and produced plays, fiction, and film scripts during the 1930s, it was not until the publication of *The Fountainhead* in 1943 that she became widely known as a writer. Her popularity continued to increase during the 1950s, especially after the appearance of her final novel, *Atlas Shrugged,* and by the early 1960s—when she turned her full attention to lecturing and writing on her Objectivist theories—she achieved a cult-like status in American popular culture. While popular with readers, Rand's writings drew mixed reviews from critics. Many of her supporters praised the romantic qualities of her writing and her depiction of heroic characters struggling with issues of good and evil in a modern context. Some defenders admired the emphasis she placed on logic and reason in her Objectivist philosophy, while others appreciated her advocacy of laissez-faire capitalism. Rand drew sharp criticism from a number of scholars, however, who variously objected to her writing for political, religious, aesthetic, and philosophical reasons. Some detractors argued that the author had failed to provide a feasible epistemology and identified a number of inconsistencies and false assumptions in her philosophical stance on faith, reason, and human behavior, which ultimately invalidated her work. Rand's political position alienated both liberal and conservative critics, and her atheism and opposition to altruism offended many religious thinkers. Feminist scholars detected misogynist notes in her fiction, while other commentators dismissed her work as didactic, inflated, pedantic, and simplistic in its representation of reality. Rand's following diminished in the 1970s, in part a result of the tension surrounding her break with Nathaniel Branden in 1968. While the Objectivist movement suffered, the author remained popular in the years that followed, and her major novels continued to draw new generations of readers.

The critical debate over Rand's work has persisted in recent decades. Such scholars as Tibor R. Machan, J. Charles King, Douglas Den Uyl, Douglas B. Rasmussen, and James T. Baker continued to investigate the ethical, philosophical, and political theories that the author espoused. In a jointly written essay, Den Uyl and Rasmussen studied the moral doctrines intrinsic to Rand's concept of capitalism, while King discovered inconsistencies between the author's system of ethics and morality on the one hand, and her theory of value on the other. Machan emphasized the heretical nature of Rand's philosophical thought and maintained that her ideas deserve "the attention of all who want to appreciate the valuable heretics that have appeared on the human scene." Other commentators, including Chris Matthew Sciabarra, Louis Torres, and Michelle Marder Kamhi, explored Rand's aesthetic theory, particularly focusing on her ideas regarding the relationship between art and human consciousness. A number of other critics, such as Stacey Olster, Karen Michalson, Diana Mertz Brickell, and Mimi Reisel Gladstein, contributed to the ongoing debate over Rand's treatment of sexuality and gender issues in her work. While Olster contended that the author's ideals of "industrial American society" and "laissez-faire capitalism" are repressive and brutal with regard to female sexuality, Michalson and Brickell discerned feminist sympathies in Rand's fiction. Brickell, writing in 1999, argued that Rand provided "one of the few philosophies capable of liberating men and women from the harmful and destructive gender roles that have existed throughout most of human history." Gladstein, however, contended that in her novel *Atlas Shrugged,* the author shaped her narrative like the lens of a camera in order to highlight the sexualized female body, namely that of Dagny Taggart, and thus privileged "the traditional male gaze of the camera eye" in her text. Although academic opinion varies widely with regard to Rand's achievements and literary merit, the author's writings significantly influenced contemporary political ideology and American popular culture. In both her fiction and philosophical writings, as Uyl and Rasmussen stated, Rand attempted "to combine an essentially classical or premodern view of man with a modern political doctrine; that is to say, an Aristotelian view of man's nature is integrated with a liberal political doctrine. The argument . . . is that freedom of action in society is a function of what is proper to living a good human life—indeed, what is necessary for the fulfillment of our human potential. There have been other intellectuals who have held a basically classical view of man and who were also political liberals. But no one else has shown the connection between those two outlooks as explicitly and successfully as Ayn Rand."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

**Night of January 16th* (play) 1935
We the Living (novel) 1936
Anthem (novel) 1938

The Unconquered (play) 1940
The Fountainhead (novel) 1943
†*The Fountainhead* (screenplay) 1949
Atlas Shrugged (novel) 1957
For the New Intellectual: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand (philosophy) 1961
The Virtue of Selfishness [with Nathaniel Branden] (essays) 1964
Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal [with Nathaniel Branden, Alan Greenspan, and Robert Hessen] (essays) 1966
Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology (philosophy) 1967
The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature (philosophy) 1969
The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution (essay) 1971
Philosophy: Who Needs It? (philosophy) 1982
The Early Ayn Rand: A Selection from Her Unpublished Fiction (short stories) 1984
The Voice of Reason: Essays in Objectivist Thought [with Leonard Peikoff and Peter Schwartz] (essays) 1989
Letters of Ayn Rand (letters) 1995

*This work was first performed as *Woman on Trial* in 1934.

†This work is an adaptation of Rand's novel by the same name.

CRITICISM

John W. Robbins (essay date 1974)

SOURCE: Robbins, John W. "Objectivist Theology." In *Answer to Ayn Rand,* pp. 67-89. Washington, D.C.: Mount Vernon Publishing Co., 1974.

[*In the following essay, Robbins attempts to answer the question, "What is Objectivist theology" and, more specifically, what is the relationship of human beings to God in Rand's thought, claiming that the author's various positions on theology and existence in her work, which he links to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century materialism, are contradictory, resulting in an "insoluble antimony" that Rand cannot overcome.*]

> *Gradually I have come to realize what every great philosophy up to now has been: the personal confession of its originator, a type of involuntary and unaware memoirs; also, that the moral (or amoral) intentions of each philosophy constitute the protoplasm from which each entire plant has grown. Indeed, one will do well (and wisely), if one wishes to explain to himself how on earth the more remote metaphysical assertions of a philosopher ever arose, to ask each time: What sort of morality is this (is he) aiming at?*
>
> (Friedrich Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil*)

I

Ayn Rand is an atheist.[1] Formally, to be an atheist is to disbelieve in the existence of a god, and, since our civilization has its roots in Christianity, atheism has come to mean disbelief in the existence of the God spoken of in the Bible. Rand, however, would have us believe that she disbelieves in all gods—Christian or otherwise—including the Anchoretic god of Aristotle. As we have seen in chapter one, however, in the discussion of the multiple meanings of "reason," philosophy is always the handmaid of theology, or faith, because unproved and undemonstrable presuppositions must be accepted for any philosophical system to begin. Every philosophy must begin somewhere, if it is to begin at all, and the beginning is just that, *a beginning.* Nothing precedes the starting point; no proofs, no demonstrations; nothing.[2] Philosophy was not released from its servitude to theology with the advent of the Renaissance: it merely chose another master to serve when it repudiated Christian revelation.

When one realizes the eternal subservience of philosophy to theology, it becomes entirely implausible to accept at face value someone's claim that he is an atheist. Strictly speaking, there can be no atheists, no more than there can be philosophies without presuppositions. There can be atheists in the sense that there can be persons who do not believe in one particular god—the god of Aristotle, for instance; but there can be no person who disbelieves in every possible god; if the person has any thoughts, *i.e.,* any philosophy at all, he believes in a god. Belief is inescapable and unavoidable. The question then arising is quite simple: in which god or gods does Ayn Rand believe? More formally, what is Objectivist theology?[3]

As I have already indicated, Ayn Rand is an atheist in the sense that she does not believe in the God of Scripture: she decided she did not, at the age of thirteen, shortly following the atheistic Revolution of 1917 in her homeland.[4] Her biographers tell us that at the age of thirteen,

> . . . attempting to formulate her convictions on a number of fundamental issues, she considered the question scrupulously—and concluded that there was no God. She wrote the causes of her conclusion in her diary: first, that there are no *reasons* to believe in God, there is no *proof* of the belief; and second, that the concept of God is insulting and degrading to man—it implies that the highest possible is not to be reached by man, that he is an inferior being who can only worship an ideal he will never achieve. By her view, there could

> be no breach between conceiving of the best possible and deciding to attain it. She rejected the concept of God as *morally* evil.[5]

I have quoted Barbara Branden at length simply because she writes at length on this point, as Rand herself no doubt thought at length. Close attention to the quoted passage should make clear that although Rand placed the lack of reasons and proof for the existence of God first in her brief list of reasons for not believing in God, this deplorable lack of proof is really secondary to the second (and primary) reason why Rand decided she was an atheist. The difference in emphasis placed upon the two reasons for Rand's atheism is by itself sufficient indication as to which reason was primary in Rand's mind at the age of thirteen and now. Lack of proof and reasons for the existence of God is treated most cursorily, almost as if it were obligatory to say something about reason and proof, and not a very pleasant duty at all. On the other hand, the rejection of God on moral grounds[6] occupies most of the attention of the writer—and the thinker. Perhaps this writer can be forgiven if he suggests that at the age of thirteen Rand was not yet capable of understanding all the "proofs" of the existence of God which have ever been offered, from Aristotle to Anselm, let alone grasping the much more subtle (and Scriptural) position of the Calvinists that the existence of God is not a matter for demonstration, but the *sine qua non* of all demonstration and all thought. Yet, if one is to accept what Mrs. Branden has written at face value, one must assume that not only had Rand read and studied the various arguments for the existence of God at the age of thirteen, but also that she had excogitated refutations of them. If this assumption seems a bit too big to swallow, then the importance of the second reason, the immorality of God, increases still more. Perhaps at this point the gentle reader will return to the motto with which this chapter began and wonder whether Nietzsche was always insane.

Rand carries this belief in the immorality of God throughout her works and her philosophy. It is this motive that informs her characterization of persons who believe in God as witchdoctors;[7] it is this motive that leads her to attacks on Christian teachings in ***Atlas Shrugged***[8] and other works. Her belief that the concept of God is "immoral" because it would mean that man is not the highest being in the universe is more than slightly reminiscent of Nietzsche's cry that there could be no gods because he could not endure not being a god.

II

Much more could be said about the implications of Rand's belief that the idea of God is immoral, but such things will appear only as the occasion arises further along in this chapter. We must now turn our attention to the Objectivist arguments countering the traditional, Thomistic proofs of the existence of God. The only such argument which is dealt with at any length is the argument from causality, which Nathaniel Branden discusses in the *Objectivist Newsletter*.[9] He writes:

> There are two basic fallacies in this argument. The first is the assumption that, if the universe required a causal explanation, the positing of a "God" would provide it. To posit God as the creator of the universe is only to push the problem back one step farther: Who then created God? Was there a still earlier God who created the God in question? We are thus led to an infinite regress—the very dilemma that the positing of a "God" was intended to solve. But if it is argued that no one created God, that God does not require a cause, that God has existed eternally—then on what grounds is it denied that the universe has existed eternally?

In ***Atlas Shrugged*** Rand wrote that "The only philosophical debt I can acknowledge is to Aristotle."[10] This is a rather curious statement in many respects. Why is this the only philosophical debt she can acknowledge? Because all the remainder of her ideas are original? Yet the educated reader, and one must assume, Miss Rand herself, knows quite well that such is not the case. Is Miss Rand's reluctance to admit any other philosophical debt then due to the fact that many of her ideas are stock-in-trade of a much less respectable group of thinkers than the Aristotelians, the materialists of the 18th and 19th centuries? As a case in point, I would like to point out the argument used by Ludwig Feuerbach, one of the more prominent of the materialists of the early 19th century:

> Nothing is more absurd than to regard nature as a single effect and to give it a *single cause* in an extra-natural being who is the effect of no other being. If I cannot refrain from spinning out fantasies, from looking further and further afield, if I am unable to stop with nature and content my intellectual need for causes with the universal action and interaction of nature, what is to prevent me from going beyong God? What is to prevent me from looking for a ground and cause of God as well? Do we not in God find the same situation as in the concatenation of natural causes and effects, the very situation that I wished to remedy by positing the existence of a God?[11]

Surely the refutation of the first cause argument offered by the Objectivists is not original—thus it is a philosophical debt. Rand's affinity to the materialists will become quite clear as this chapter progresses. It is this debt that must be grasped if one is to understand the framework in which Objectivism rests.

To proceed with the argument proper: one should quite carefully note that the denial of a transcendental God does not (and cannot) eliminate the attributes of God: at least some of the attributes are simply reassigned to some other being, in this case, the universe, or nature,

or Objective Reality. As Branden wrote, "It is true that there cannot be an infinite series of antecedent causes."[12] That is, there must always be a first, a *causa sui.* For Christians it is God that is *causa sui,* not the universe. But for Objectivists it is Objective Reality which is endowed with this attribute. Nature is the cause of itself. Matter is *causa sui.*[13] All this may seem quite elementary to some readers, but it should be emphasized that the attributes of the Christian God are, as it were, unavoidable categories of thought.[14] If the attributes of God are not regarded as his, they are regarded as belonging to some part or the whole of his creation. *Causa sui* is but a single example; another would be the Christian doctrine that God is love[15] is transmogrified by Rand to the doctrine that the universe is a benevolent, not a malevolent, universe. This is, quite simply, an excellent example of the pathetic fallacy and it results, in this case, from transferring an attribute of God to his creation.[16] Some of the other attributes of God are similarly transferred to Objective Reality—and yet we are asked to believe that the Objectivists do not believe in god—any god. Such a request, when one understands it, becomes impossible to fulfill.

III

If, then, Objective Reality is the (or a) god of Objectivism, what is the nature of this god? The answer appears to be: reality is material. It is matter—indestructible matter. This metaphysical belief is the indispensable basis of Objectivist ethics, as we shall see in the next chapter. Rand writes:

> There is only one fundamental alternative in the universe: existence or nonexistence—and it pertains to a single class of entities: to living organisms. The existence of inanimate [Rand apparently means inorganic] matter is unconditional, the existence of life is not: it depends on a specific course of action. Matter is indestructible, it changes its forms, but it cannot cease to exist.[17]
>
> ([*The Virtue of Selfishness*])

Matter, Objective Reality, is everlasting, indestructible. Another attribute of God has been transferred to Nature. As we have seen in chapter two, there is no warrant for rationally accepting this doctrine of indestructible matter as Reality: indestructible matter is postulated by Rand for the purpose of lending plausibility to her ethical system. But this assertion of indestructible matter establishes indisputably Rand's membership in the materialist school.

Rand formulates this metaphysical postulate in the simple proposition, "Existence exists." Existence, according to Rand, is an axiomatic concept that all thought presupposes; "existence exists" is a way of translating this axiomatic concept into the form of an axiom.[18] It is this axiom that forms the basis of Rand's philosophical system.[19] Rand is not at all unclear as to what the nature of Existence is. She is vigorous in her attack against those philosophers whom she regards as adherents of the "primacy of consciousness," such as Descartes, Kant, and Hegel; and insistent upon her adherence to the "primacy of existence."[20] Since she chooses to oppose the terms "consciousness" and Hegel; and insistent upon her adherence to the "primacy of of inorganic, indestructible matter". Existence is unconsciousness. This is the only warranted inference from her contradistinction between the primacy of existence and the primacy of consciousness.[21] "Existence," then, is everlasting (indestructible), immutable,[22] omnipresent[23] matter.[24]

In the chapter on Objectivist Epistemology we have examined and found wanting the notion of the category of being; we concluded that it was indistinguishable from nothing, and that Hegel's fancied movement from being to nothing was actually the movement from one word to another. We shall not repeat that analysis here; we shall be satisfied with the realization that Existence for Rand is material. Now this is passable 18th century physics, but physics in the 20th century long ago discarded any belief in matter.[25] Nathaniel Branden at one point seemed to realize the fact that the investigations of physicists have eliminated the last vestige of matter from the universe, for he wrote:

> Long after the time when the mechanical "model" was recognized by physicists as inapplicable to many aspects of the physical world, *i.e.,* inapplicable even to many inanimate, deterministic systems within the universe . . .[26]

Yet earlier in the same essay he apparently contradicted this statement, by saying:

> The actions of a stone, for example, are only *re*actions to other objects or forces; a stone, which moves by a mechanistic type of causation . . .

One might conclude from these two statements that Branden was uncertain as to the status of matter and mechanism, or that he was repudiating by implication the conclusion of physicists. One suspects, however, that the former is the true state of affairs, for the latter would inevitably undercut the Objectivist distinction between the non-human universe and man, especially in the field of metaethical theory. Perhaps this is a clue to the causes of Branden's break with Rand:—with the disintegration of matter, of which Branden, not Rand, has given evidence of being aware, Objectivist ethics must in turn dissolve, for they rest inescapably on the postulate of indestructible matter, as we shall see in the next chapter.

IV

But the existence of matter is but one-half of Objectivist theology. The other half is the existence of consciousness, a specific kind of consciousness, conceptual

consciousness, Man's consciousness. The fact that Rand regards Man as a god is hardly to be denied; the evidence for such an assertion abounds in her works.[27] Let us begin with ***Atlas Shrugged,*** where overtones of the Christian religion are ever present. For example, one of the principal doctrines of the Christian faith is the sovereign election of God, *i.e.,* God chooses some people to be saved and destines others to be doomed. In ***Atlas Shrugged*** it is John Galt who performs this function of choosing people to be saved, *i.e.,* to go to Galt's Gulch, which is Rand's immanentization of the idea of Heaven. He comes as a thief in the night to take the suffering saints to be with him in Galt's Gulch—the suffering saints are even castigated by the worldings as Puritans. The overtones of Christianity are so blatant as to eliminate any doubts that Rand knew what she was doing. When Henry Rearden, one of the suffering Puritans, see Ragnar Danneskjold for the first time, Danneskjold looks like "an avenging angel."[28] He informs Rearden that there is a "large bank account waiting for him" in Atlantis, *i.e.,* Galt's Gulch; and refers to the Parousia of John Galt as the "day of deliverance."[29] It was Augustine who wrote that the creature is not at peace until he knows God—and that the need for God will result in an endless quest until the creature sees God face to face. But it is Dagny Taggart who thinks:

> You—she thought—whoever you are, whom I have always loved and never found, you whom I expected to see at the end of the rails beyond the horizon, you whose presence I had always felt in the streets of the city and whose world I had wanted to build, it is my love for you that had kept me moving, my love and my hope to reach you and my wish to be worthy of you on the day when I would stand before you face to face . . .[30]

Later in the tale she realizes who it was that she was so longing to see: it was John Galt, Rand's surrogate for the Savior of men, Jesus Christ.[31]

When Dagny was admitted to Atlantis and saw all those men who had been disappearing from the earth,[32] her experience is described by Rand as an entrance into Heaven:

> "This?" She laughed suddenly, looking at the faces of the men against the golden sunburst of rays filling the great windows. "This looks like . . . You know, I never hoped to see any of you again, I wondered at times how much I'd give for just one more glimpse or one more word—and now—now this is like that dream[33] you imagine in childhood, when you think that some day, in heaven, you will see those great departed whom you had not seen on earth . . ."[34]

And one of those great departed, Ken Danagger, one of the persecuted Puritans, replies:

> "That's not all," said Danagger. "There's something you'd want to hear from them. I didn't know it, either, until I saw him for the first time"—he pointed to Galt—"and he said it to me, and then I knew what it was that I had missed all my life. Miss Taggart, you'd want them to look at you and to say, 'Well done.'"[35]

The reward of Dagny in Atlantis is to see John Galt smile;[36] need it be said that a smile can be considered a reward only by the devout believer who has loved his lord full and well? And Dagny, we are told, thought of John Galt the way a Christian must think of Jesus Christ: "Once they have seen him—thought Dagny—can they wish to look at anybody else?"[37] I have not cited these allusions to Christianity simply in order to show that Rand has read—and studied—the Bible, but also to show that the allusions are not accidental,[38] but conscious. Rand is quite consciously infusing doctrines of Christianity into her immanence theology;[39] she is deliberately investing the creature with the attributes of the Creator. By her undisguised allusions to Christianity she gives us to understand that the reader should not overlook the fact that Objectivism has a very definite theology, despite the formal claim of atheism. Rand writes that "the sense of life dramatized in ***The Fountainhead***" is *"man worship."*[40] Yet neither ***Atlas Shrugged*** nor ***The Fountainhead*** provides the best demonstration that for Rand, "theology is anthropology."[41] Her theological work *par excellence* is ***Anthem,***[42] one of her earliest and shortest novels.

Briefly, the book describes the emergence of the individual from a totalitarian society in the future. Its theme is the transition from the Sovereign State to the Sovereign Individual. This theme has, of course, great implications for her political theory, as we shall see. In the first ten chapters of the book are briefly described the life and physical escape of Equality 7-2521 and Liberty 5-3000, two subjects of the Sovereign State. Rand hesitates to make the Sovereign Individual emerge alone: He is quickly followed by another, who becomes his wife. But Rand quite clearly says that the Sovereign Individual could have achieved his escape and lived a human life alone:

> Then a blow of pain struck us, [Equality 7-2521] our first and our only. We thought of the Golden One [Liberty 5-3000]. We thought of the Golden One whom we shall never see again. Then the pain passed. It is best. We are one of the Damned. It is best if the Golden One forget our name and the body which bore that name.[43]

We are thus given to understand that the autonomy of the Sovereign Individual remains unbreached by the emergence of two Sovereign Individuals.

Chapter eleven begins the intellectual emergence: Equality 7-2521 discovers the word "I." Escape has already occurred—physically; now begins the process of intellectual liberation. The chapter begins "I am, I think, I will." If Rand wishes us to understand that these three states or actions are logically and/or temporally in or-

der, then she has contradicted herself. Despite her emphasis elsewhere on the absolute priority of "existence" she quite explicitly says in ***The Virtue of Selfishness*** that "He [man] *can* abandon his means of survival, his mind, he *can* turn himself into a subhuman creature and he *can* turn his life into a brief span of agony—. . . Man has to be man by choice . . ."[44] ". . . as man is a being of self-made wealth, so he is a being of self-made soul."[45] As thoroughly as any existentialist, Rand believes that man makes himself, that existence precedes essence. Rand's position is that man's fundamental decision, "to think or not to think" determines the answer "to be or not to be." The implications of this position are far-reaching for all branches of her philosophy.

Making the incorrect choice has metaphysical implications. This conclusion leads her into insoluble antimonies. If "man has to be man by choice," who makes the choice? Rand repeatedly commits the fallacy of the stolen concept, a fallacy which she detects exclusively in others.[46] Man makes himself, "man is a being of self-made soul" is a contradiction, and a blatant contradiction. "I am. I think. I will." should be reversed: I will. I think. I am. Such a reversal, which is consistent with her position in ***The Virtue of Selfishness,*** would accentuate the primacy of the will in Rand. It is by an act of will that a "subhuman being" chooses to be a "man." The being lifts itself by its bootstraps. The being is its own creator.[47] This is pure existentialism and humanism. It is one of the most blatant examples of the fallacy of the stolen concept that this writer has encountered.

Anthem does not end, however, with the affirmation of the deity of man: Man is owner of all creation: "My hands . . . My spirit . . . My sky . . . My forest . . . This earth of mine . . ."[48] The new individual god who has replaced the old collective god is here asserting its ownership of all. Both gods are all-inclusive; both gods are unlimited. Both gods are the *summun bonum*:

> This, my body and spirit, this is the end of the quest. I wished to know the meaning of things. I am the meaning. I wished to find a warrant for being. I need no warrant for being, and no word of sanction upon my being. I am the warrant and the sanction.[49]

The godhood of the Sovereign Individual is absolute:

> It is my eyes which see, and the sight of my eyes grants beauty to the earth. It is my ears which hear, and the hearing of my ears gives its song to the world. It is my mind which thinks, and the judgment of my mind is the only searchlight that can find the truth. It is my will which chooses, and the choice of my will is the only edict I must respect.[50]

Here, stripped of the camouflage of serious philosophy, is the spirit that informs Objectivism. Here first appears the insoluble antimony in Objectivist Theology: Consciousness *v.* Existence. The premise of solipsism glares through: but for me, there would be no beauty, no song, no truth, no morals. I am the giver of beauty, sound, truth and morality. Very little is left of "Objective Reality," for if the beauty is derivative from me, why not the form? If the song is my creation, why not the singer? If the truth . . . the implications are monstrous. If the morality decreed by my Sovereign Will is true morality, then I am beyond good and evil. Rand recognizes and makes explicit the primacy of the will: "Many words have been granted me, and some are wise, and some are false, but only three are holy: 'I will it!'"[51] This is the motive of Rand's atheism: man is god. His Will is holy; His Decrees are definitive; His Acts are creative. Man is the Way, the Truth, and the Life:

> Whatever road I take, the guiding star is within me; the guiding star and the loadstone which point the way. They point in but one direction. They point to me.[52]

Rand adopts one of Kant's ideas as her own: that man is an end in himself:

> And my happiness needs no higher aim to vindicate it. My happiness is not the means to any end. It is the end. It is its own goal. It is its own purpose. Neither am I the means to any end others may wish to accomplish. I am not a tool for their use.[53]

Furthermore, man is his own miracle: "I am a man. This miracle of me is mine to own and keep, and mine to guard, and mine to use, and mine to kneel before!"[54] With the banishment of God from the universe, man takes on the power of miracle-working. Arguments against miracles are useful only for showing the impossibility of miracles not performed by Man. Man, who is his own Creator and creature, is a miracle-worker. Her worship of Man[55] is conscious; her language imitates that of the Bible: "I guard my treasures: my thought, my will, my freedom. And the greatest of these is freedom."[56] Freedom is sovereignty, the absence of a superior, the non-existence of the Creator. Rand has rightly said that "the greatest of these is freedom" for by this declaration of independence she has sought to establish her own will as autonomous. This is her faith; this is her theology.

> And now I see the face of god, and I raise this god over the earth, this god whom men have sought since men came into being, this god who will grant them joy and peace and pride. This god, this one word: "I."[57]

The deification of man is complete and explicit.[58]

In the 12th chapter of ***Anthem,*** this god becomes the Saviour of all mankind:

> It was when I read the first of the books I found in my house that I saw the word "I." And when I understood this word, the book fell from my hands, and I wept, I who had never known tears. I wept in deliverance and in pity for all mankind.[59]

The Saviour, the Sovereign Individual, then calls his wife, and in an imitation of Genesis gives names to himself and to her. The names are quite significant: Prometheus and Gaea. Prometheus, because "He took the light of the gods and he brought it to men, and he taught men to be gods. And he suffered for his deed as all bearers of light must suffer."[60] Gaea, because she was "a goddess . . . who was the mother of the earth and of all the gods. . . ."[61]

The similarity between Rand and Karl Marx at this point is startling. Rand quite obviously believes man to be a "product of . . . nature."[62] Marx writes that "*Man* is directly a *natural being.*"[63] Furthermore Marx, like Rand, believes man to be his own creator:

> . . . *the whole of what is called world history* is nothing but the creation of man by human labour, . . . he, therefore, has the evident and irrefutable proof of his *self-creation,* of his own origins.[64]

In a passage which Rand herself might have appended to ***Anthem,*** Marx has written.

> A being does not regard himself as independent unless he is his own master, and he is only his own master when he owes his existence to himself. A man who lives by the favour of another considers himself a dependent being. But I live completely by another person's favour when I owe to him not only the continuance of my life but also *its creation*; when he is its *source.* My life has necessarily such a cause outside itself if it is not my own creation.[65]

This is the core of all humanism: the lust to be as gods. Marx goes on to say, however, that

> The idea of *creation* is thus one which it is difficult to eliminate from popular consciousness. This consciousness is *unable to conceive* that nature and man exist on their own account, because such an existence contradicts all the tangible facts of practical life.[66]

Marx wants to deny such "tangible facts" and replace them with his doctrine of the self-creation of man. It is because of this motive that he, like Rand, idolizes Prometheus:

> Philosophy makes no secret of it. Prometheus's admission: ["In sooth all gods I hate"] is its own admission, its own motto against all gods, heavenly and earthly, who do not acknowledge the consciousness of man as the supreme divinity. There must be no god on a level with it.[67]

Marx, like Rand, does not report the reply to Prometheus's expression of hatred for the gods: "It appears you have been stricken with no small madness." As Voegelin has remarked:

> Anyone who does not know *Prometheus Bound* must conclude that the quoted "confession" sums up the meaning of the tragedy, not that Aeschylus wished to represent hatred of the gods as madness."[68]

By choosing the name Prometheus for her hero in ***Anthem,*** Rand has unmistakably declared her position, and has inadvertently implied that the hero is mad in his self-deification.

> Not until the gnostic revolt of the Roman era do Prometheus, Cain, Eve, and the serpent become symbols of man's deliverance from the power of the tyrannical god of this world.[69]

In ***Atlas Shrugged,*** Rand's hero John Galt says:

> What is the nature of the guilt that your teachers call his Original Sin? What are the evils man acquired when he fell from a state they consider perfection? Their myth declares that he ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge—he acquired a mind and became a rational being. It was the knowledge of good and evil—he being a moral being. He was sentenced to earn his bread by his labor—he became a productive being. He was sentenced to experience desire—he acquired the capacity of sexual enjoyment. The evils for which they damn him are reason, morality, creativeness, joy—all the cardinal virtues of his existence.[70]

The fall was really an ascent; Adam and Eve were courageous pioneers; and the serpent was the means of liberation.

Rand's Prometheus names his wife Gaea, "who was the mother of the earth and of all gods." This is done for she is to be ". . . the mother of a new kind of gods."[71] The implications of this are not difficult to see. Prometheus hates all the gods, and Gaea is the mother of all the gods. With inadvertent truthfulness Rand has revealed to us the inevitable consequence of her humanism: the murder of man. By her symbols, she has clearly instructed us that the new world which Prometheus has begun is as totalitarian and as demonic as the world from which he "escaped." Rand's heroes are supermen, *ubermenschen,* and their sovereignty results not in a free society but in a totalitarian society.

> Man cannot transform himself into a superman; the attempt to create a superman is an attempt to murder man. Historically, the murder of God is not followed by the superman, but by the murder of man: the deicide of the gnostic theoreticians is followed by the homicide of the revolutionary practitioners.[72]

Lest the reader think this conclusion has been reached by sleight-of-hand, by manipulation of mythical figures into situations which Rand did not intend, I shall present my argument a bit more fully.

V

The insoluble antimony of Rand's theology lies in its dualistic gods: Man and Objective Reality, or Man and Nature. We have already seen how Objective Reality is to be understood as Matter—indestructible, determined Matter.[73] It remains to be seen, however, exactly what

Man is.[74] At one point Man is defined as ". . . an indivisible entity, an integrated unit of two attributes: of matter and consciousness. . . ."[75] Rand is adamantly opposed to what she calls the "soulbody dichotomy": "They [the 'mystics'] have taught man that he is a hopeless misfit made of two elements [a 'corpse' and a 'ghost'], both symbols of death."[76] Yet Objectivism insists that Man is fundamentally different from the rest of Nature. Although Man is a product of Nature,[77] "Nature has not 'programmed' him to think automatically."[78] Man has "free will."

> In the choice to focus or not to focus, to think or not to think, to activate the conceptual level of his consciousness or to suspend it—and in this choice alone—is man psychologically free.[79]

This doctrine of free will is of fundamental importance in the Objectivist system: it will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter on Objectivist ethics. It is important in Objectivist theology for it establishes an insoluble antimony at the very foundation of the system, an antimony as irreconcilable as Kant's antimony between the *Homo Noumenon* and the *Homo Phenomenon.* If you will recall, Kant rigidly separated the noumenal world and the phenomenal world. The latter is the world of appearance, mechanism and determinism. The former, in the case of man, is the world of freedom. The world of Nature is deterministic, but the world of Man, insofar as he is not simply a phenomenon, is the world of freedom.

> Freedom, however, among all the ideas of speculative reason is the only one whose possibility we know a priori. We do not understand it, but we know it as the condition of the moral law which we do know.[80]

This argument is also used by the Objectivists, as we have seen in their attacks on the doctrine of Original Sin. In chapter two a critique of the other Objectivist argument for free will—the argument from the possibility of knowledge—was presented. Let it suffice here to say that Man is qualitatively different from the remainder of Nature. While the universe is *causa sui,* so is Man:

> The primary choice to focus, to set one's mind to the purpose of cognitive integration, is a *first cause* in a man's consciousness. On the psychological level, this choice is causally irreducible; it is the highest regulator in the mental system; it is subject to man's direct, volitional control.[81]

Both Man and Nature are first causes or prime movers, *i.e.,* both beings have attributes usually assigned to God.[82] Because of this, a tension arises between the gods, a tension that is aptly caught by one of Rand's favorite quotations from Francis Bacon: "Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed." The tension within Man, between his constituent Matter and his sovereign Reason,[83] cannot be resolved by Objectivism by attributing man's consciousness to a transcendental God; Objectivism holds that Man, including man's capacity to reason, is a product of Nature. Nature has determined, in effect, that Man shall not be determined. This position alone is impossible.[84] Mind, consciousness, is an epiphenomenon of matter, yet mind has the capacity to master matter.[85] The derivation of mind from matter, of reason from unreason, of consciousness from unconsciousness, of freedom from mechanism, is an enormous—and insoluble—problem for Objectivism. But the pointing up of this problem is not my purpose here. Here it must only be underscored that man, for the Objectivists, even though he differs essentially from the rest of reality, is still regarded as an integral part and product of nature. Rand's distinction between the looters and the producers—a distinction which forms a major theme of ***Atlas Shrugged***—between the men who seek power over other men and the men who seek not to rule others, but to conquer nature, breaks down precisely because *man is a part of nature.* He is a product of nature, not of a supernatural Creator. The dichotomy Rand has drawn between the peaceful benefactors of mankind who have sought only to conquer nature and the violent malefactors of mankind who have only lusted for power over their fellow human beings is eliminated by the fundamental premise of Objectivist theology that man is a natural being. Because Rand—and all secular philosophers—has repudiated the idea of the special creation of man by a rational, omnipotent God, she has committed herself to the destruction of man. The conquest of nature is, finally, the conquest of man.

> I am only making clear what Man's conquest of Nature really means and especially that final stage in the conquest, which, perhaps, is not far off. The final stage is come when Man by eugenics, by pre-natal conditioning, and by an education and propaganda based on a perfect applied psychology, has obtained full control over himself. *Human* nature will be the last part of Nature to surrender to Man. The battle will then be won.[86]

What Rand (and others) have disguised in the phrase "Man's conquest of Nature," is the fact that

> What we call Man's power is, in reality, a power possessed by some men which they may, or may not, allow other men to profit by.[87]
>
> . . . what we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument.[88]

When Ayn Rand made Man his own creator, giving him the power to choose to be a man or not, she also made man his own destroyer. Her total and complete repudiation of Christianity as lies hatched by the minds of men[89] has put her in the position of repudiating man. Such a conclusion was to be expected: when she repudiated the God of the Bible, she also began the train of thought that must conclude in the elimination of the image of God in man.[90]

> Man's conquest of Nature, if the dreams of some scientific planners are realized, means the rule of a few hundreds of men over billions upon billions of men. There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side. Each new power won *by* man is a power *over* man as well. Each advance leaves him weaker as well as stronger. In every victory, besides being the general who triumphs, he is also the prisoner who follows the triumphal car.[91]

As Lewis wrote: "Man's final conquest has proved to be the abolition of man."[92] This is the end of the deification of man:[93] the reification of man.

> *Qui Verbum Dei contempserunt,*
> *eis auferetur etiam verbum hominis.*

Notes

1. "A man of reason does not accept ideas on faith. He knows that all of one's conclusions must be based on and derived from the facts of reality. He is, therefore, an atheist." Nathaniel Branden, *The Objectivist Newsletter,* April 1963, p. 15. "As uncompromising advocates of reason, Objectivists are, of course, atheists. We are intransigent atheists, *not* militant ones. We are *for* reason; therefore, as a consequence, we are opposed to any form of mysticism; therefore, we do not grant any validity to the notion of a supernatural being. But atheism is scarcely the center of our philosophical position. To be known as crusaders for atheism would be acutely embarrassing to us; the adversary is too unworthy." *Loc. cit.,* December, 1965, p. 58. Branden's statement that "atheism is scarcely the center of our philosophical position" conflicts with Rand's assertion of the "primacy of existence." As a matter of fact, atheism is the center of Objectivist philosophy because it is its metaphysical position.

2. "It is always necessary to begin with some apriori proposition that cannot be deduced from anything more fundamental." Gordon H. Clark, *The Philosophy of Gordon H. Clark, A Festschrift,* p. 471.

3. For those readers who may feel ill at ease with the title of this chapter I would like to provide a short dialogue from *The Fountainhead*: "'You're a profoundly religious man, Mr. Roark—in your own way. I can see that in your buildings.'" "'That's true,' said Roark."

4. "The second incident occurred when Ayn was not yet fourteen. It consisted of an entry in her diary: 'Today, I decided that I am an atheist.'" Nathaniel and Barbara Branden, *Who Is Ayn Rand?,* [(New York 1962)] p. 129.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Like Kant, whom Rand views as her arch-antagonist, Rand quite explicitly believes that theology is dependent on, or derivative from, ethics. Like Kant, Rand rejects the God of the Bible and chooses another god, on the basis of morality.

7. See *For the New Intellectual* Signet, 1961. Rand is quite generous in her use of derogatory words and phrases for those with whom she disagrees, a trait shared by many others. However, Rand is unique in that she calls such a form of argument a fallacy, and then proceeds to commit the fallacy repeatedly. She describes the fallacy as follows:

   > The essential characteristic of the Argument from Intimidation is its appeal to moral self-doubt and its reliance on the fear, guilt or ignorance of the victim. It is used in the form of an ultimatum demanding that the victim renounce a given idea without discussion, under threat of being considered morally unworthy. The pattern is always: "Only those who are evil (dishonest, heartless, insensitive, ignorant, etc.) can hold such an idea."
   >
   > (*The Virtue of Selfishness*; Signet, 1964, p. 139)

   The argument from intimidation is used very frequently by Rand, who seeks to make her readers renounce a given idea without discussion, under threat of being considered morally unworthy. Her pattern is always: "Only those who are evil (altruists, mystics, whim-worshippers, witchdoctors, Attilas, etc.) can hold such an idea."

8. *E.g.,* "But a 'moral commandment' is a contradiction in terms. The moral is the chosen, not the forced; the understood, not the obeyed. The moral is the rational, and the reason accepts no commandments." ([1957,] p. 1018.) "The name of this monstrous absurdity is Original Sin. A sin without volition is a slap at morality and an insolent contradiction in terms: that which is outside the possibility of choice is outside the province of morality. If man is evil by birth, he has no will, no power to change it; if he has no will, he can be neither good nor evil; a robot is amoral. To hold, as man's sin, a fact not open to his choice is a mockery of morality. To hold man's nature as his sin is a mockery of nature. To punish him for a crime he committed before he was born is a mockery of justice. To hold him guilty in a matter where no innocence exists is a mockery of reason." (p. 1025.) These passages disclose little but a complete failure, and perhaps even a complete lack of effort, to understand the Christian doctrines of the precepts of God and original sin. Branden from the point of view of a psychologist writes: "It is worth observing, in this connection, that both the religious doctrine of Original Sin and its secular version, the Freudian theory of an *id,* are disastrous psychologically. Aside from the fact that they are groundless and offensive to reason, they are extremely antitherapeutic." (*The Objectivist,*

May 1966, p. 9.) Branden shows his misunderstanding of the Christian doctrine of Original sin when he writes: "Neither is man born with any sort of Original Sin; if a man feels guilty, it is not because he is guilty by nature; sin is not 'original,' it is *originated.* The problem of anxiety is psychological, not metaphysical." (*Loc. cit.,* November 1966, p. 12.) "The concept of original sin is the common opponent against which all the different trends of the philosophy of the Enlightenment join forces. In this struggle Hume is on the side of English deism, and Rousseau of Voltaire; the unity of the goal seems for a time to outweigh all differences as to the means of attaining it." Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment,* p. 141.

9. May 1962, p. 19.
10. "About the Author."
11. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion,* p. 101. "But nowadays, in our evolutionary conception of the universe, there is absolutely no room for either a Creator or a Ruler; and to talk of a Supreme Being shut out from the whole existing world, implies a contradiction in terms, . . ." Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific,* p. 14. This statement of Engels' sounds very much like Branden: "To demand a cause for all of existence is to demand a contradiction; if the cause exists, it is part of existence; if it does *not* exist, it cannot be a cause." *The Objectivist Newsletter,* May 1962, p. 19. Nothing could be more clear from this argument that Branden is equivocating on the word "existence." "Existence" means matter: Branden seeks to instill the notion that "Existence" and "God" are mutually exclusive concepts when he writes "Existence—not 'God'—is the First Cause." Unfortunately Branden has so misrepresented the Thomist argument that his attempted refutation refutes an argument never made by Thomas, that God is somehow non-existent. And because God exists, He 'causes' other existents to exist. To say, as Branden does, that therefore "Existence, not 'God' is the First Cause" is tantamount to saying that "Existence" (since all causes exist) is the cause of every action, which is quite simply a meaningless statement. This writer does not think that the Thomist arguments are valid, but he does recognize that they ought to be refuted not by misrepresentation, but by logic. If Branden be correct, all statements 'A causes B' are incorrect, for since A exists, it is actually "existence" which causes B. Such an argument is devoid of sense.
12. Nathaniel Branden, *The Objectivist Newsletter,* May 1962, p. 19.
13. ". . . we may regard the material and cosmic world as the supreme being, as the cause of all causes, as the creator of heaven and earth." Lenin, quoting Dietzgen, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism,* p. 251.
14. Here I must acknowledge but one of my innumerable philosophical debts—to Rousas J. Rushdoony who brought this fact to my attention through his many published works.
15. I John 4:8, *inter alia.*
16. Strictly speaking, only a person can be bene-volent or male-volent, for "volent"=will. When Rand calls the universe benevolent, rather than malevolent, she is not making an intelligible statement.
17. *The Virtue of Selfishness,* p. 15. See *Atlas Shrugged,* "This is John Galt speaking."
18. See Chapter Two.
19. "We, the men of the mind, are now on strike against you in the name of a single axiom, which is the root of our moral code, just as the root of yours is the wish to escape it: the axiom that *existence exists.*" *Atlas Shrugged,* p. 1015.
20. Lenin is quite as insistent as Rand on this point in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.*
21. "If nothing exists, there can be no consciousness: a consciousness with nothing to be conscious of is a contradiction in terms. A consciousness conscious of nothing but itself is a contradiction in terms: before it could identify itself as consciousness, it had to be conscious of something. If that which you claim to perceive does not exist, what you possess is not consciousness." *Atlas Shrugged,* p. 1015.
22. "This means that although reality is immutable and, in any given context, only one answer is true, . . ." Ayn Rand, *The Objectivist Newsletter,* February 1965, p. 7. In this sentence Rand transfers another attribute of God to Nature.
23. "Existence exists; you cannot go outside it, you cannot get under it, on top of it or behind it. Existence exists—and *only* existence exists: *there is nowhere else to go.*" Nathaniel Branden, *The Objectivist Newsletter,* May 1962, p. 19.
24. Some readers may still question whether Rand actually believes in matter as the nature of existence. Perhaps a quotation from *Atlas Shrugged* will clarify her position:

> All thinking is a process of identification and integration. Man perceives a blob of color; by integrating the evidence of his sight and his touch, he learns to identify it as a solid object; he learns to identify the object as a table; he learns that the table is made of wood; he learns that the wood consists of cells, that the cells consist of molecules, that the molecules consist of atoms."
>
> (p. 1016.)

In addition, Nathaniel Branden has written:

> "It is necessary to mention that many of Professor Blanshard's own philosophical premises are deeply at variance with those of Objectivism. He is a representative of the Absolute Idealist school of thought . . ."
>
> (*The Objectivist Newsletter,* February 1963, p. 8.)

There are many similar references; perhaps Galt's speech in *Atlas Shrugged* is the most fertile.

25. See, for example, Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe.*

26. *The Objectivist,* March 1966, p. 11. The sentence continues: ". . . a disastrous legacy remained: the insidiously persistent notion that every action, including every action of man, is only a *re*action to some antecedent action or motion or force."

27. "This philosophy [Feuerbach's, not Rand's] has for its principle . . . a real being, the true *Ens realissimum*—man; . . . It generates thought from the *opposite* of thought, from Matter, from existence, from the senses; . . ." Ludwig Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity,* p. xxxv.

28. *Atlas Shrugged,* p. 574.

29. *Ibid.,* p. 581. One will of course recognize the teachings of Christianity that the saved will receive rewards in Heaven, and the Second Advent of Christ will deliver the saints from the tribulations of the world.

30. *Ibid.,* p. 634. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." I Corinthians 13:12. See also Genesis 32:30; Exodus 33:11.

31. "John, that night, it was *you* that I was thinking of ' only I didn't know it . . ." *Ibid.,* p. 958.

32. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Matthew 25:40-42.

33. "Religion is the dream of the human mind." Ludwig Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity,* p. xxxix. "Men create gods—and demons—in their own likeness; mystic fantasies, as a rule, are invented to explain some phenomenon for which men find no explanation." Ayn Rand, *The Objectivist,* July 1971, p. 7.

34. *Atlas Shrugged,* p. 735.

35. *Ibid.,* pp. 735-736. "His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matthew 25:21, 23.

36. "Her reward was to see Galt smile . . ." *Atlas Shrugged,* p. 803.

37. *Ibid.,* p. 1123.

38. "A few years ago, Ayn Rand gave a series of private lectures on the art of fiction-writing. During a discussion period, she happened to remark that there was not a single word in her novels whose purpose she could not explain." Nathaniel Branden, *Who Is Ayn Rand?,* pp. 110-111.

39. Rand launches a vigorous attack on transcendental theology in *Atlas Shrugged*: she attacks the "mystics of the spirit" for presenting as knowledge negative definitions: ". . . God is non-man, heaven is non-earth, soul is non-body, virtue is non-profit, A is non-A, perception is non-sensory, knowledge is non-reason. Their definitions are not acts of defining, but of wiping out." (p. 1035.) One might compare this passage (and other similar passages in which Rand ridicules transcendence and accepts only immanence theology) to a passage from Feuerbach: "Religion is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is—man is not what God is. God is the infinite, man the finite being; God is perfect, man imperfect; God eternal, man temporal; God almighty, man weak; God holy, man sinful. God and man are extremes: God is the absolutely positive, the sum of all realities; man the absolutely negative, comprehending all negations." *Essence of Christianity,* p. 33.

40. *The Objectivist,* March 1968, p. 5. Rand seeks to account for religious emotions by seeking their true object(s) in the visible world: "Religion's monopoly in the field of ethics has made it extremely difficult to communicate the emotional meaning and connotations of a rational view of life. Just as religion has pre-empted the field of ethics, turning morality *against* man, so it has usurped the highest moral concepts of our language, placing them outside this earth and beyond man's reach. 'Exaltation' is usually taken to mean an emotional state evoked by contemplating the supernatural. 'Worship' means the emotional experience of loyalty and dedication to something higher than man. 'Reverence' means the emotion of a sacred respect, to be experienced on one's knees. 'Sacred' means superior to and not-to-be-touched by any concerns of man or of this earth. Etc. . . .

    "It is this highest level of man's emotions that has to be released from the murk of mysticism and redirected at its proper object: man." *Loc. cit.,* pp. 4-5. Compare this statement to Feuerbach: "The purely, truly human emotions are religious; but for

that reason the religious emotions are purely human: . . ." *Essence of Christianity,* p. 282.

41. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity,* p. xxxvii.

42. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary,* an anthem is "1. a composition, in prose or verse, sung antiphonally, or by two voices or choirs, responsively; 2. A composition in unmeasured prose (usually from the Scriptures or Liturgy) set to music; 3. *loosely* in poetry: A song, as of praise or gladness. Also used of the English 'National' or 'Royal anthem,' which is technically a *hymn.*"

43. *Anthem,* p. 86.

44. Page 24-25. This passage contradicts other passages in which Rand denies this to be possible. We have quoted one or two of these in Chapter two.

45. *Ibid.,* p. 27. "Are you a thinking being before you think? In creating the first thought you create yourself, the thinking one; . . ." Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own,* p. 31.

46. This fallacy will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, Objectivist Ethics.

47. "Man is the sole animal capable of working his way out of the merely animal state—his normal state is one appropriate to his consciousness, one that has to be created by himself." Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature,* in *Marx and Engels on Religion,* p. 192.

48. *Anthem,* p. 108.

49. *Ibid.,* pp. 108-109. "Man, especially the religious man, is to himself the measure of all things, of all reality." Ludwig Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity,* p. 22. In her *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology* (pp. 13-14), Rand wrote: "It is here that Protagoras' old dictum may be given a new meaning, the opposite of the one he intended: 'Man is the measure of all things.' Man *is* the measure, epistemologically—*not* metaphysically. In regard to human knowledge, man has to be the measure, since he has to bring all things into the realm of the humanly knowable."

50. *Anthem,* p. 109. "The distinguished type of human being feels *himself* as value-determining; he does not need to be ratified; he judges that 'which is harmful to me is harmful as such'; he knows that *he* is the something which gives honor to objects; he *creates values.* This type honors everything he knows about himself; his morality is self-glorification." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* IX, 260.

51. *Anthem,* p. 109.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.,* pp. 109-110. "But neither politics nor ethics nor philosophy are ends in themselves, neither in life nor in literature. Only Man is an end in himself." Ayn Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto,* [(Signet, 1971)] p. 129.

54. *Anthem,* p. 110.

55. "The motive and purpose of my writing can best be summed up by saying that if a dedication page were to precede the total of my work, it would read: To the glory of man." Ayn Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto,* p. 137.

56. *Anthem,* p. 110. Nor is this the only imitation of the Bible. The allusions are almost too numerous to mention: "Your will be done" (p. 105), an echo of the Lord's Prayer; the end of chapter 11, which is quoted in the text, is an allusion to the first chapter of John's gospel. The religious words and phrases in *Anthem* are even more conspicuous than the imitations of Biblical phrases. I refer the reader to pages 11, 53, 55, 63, 85, 90, 93-97, 104-123.

57. *Anthem,* pp. 112-113. "The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that *man is the highest essence for man, . . .*" Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,* in *Marx and Engels on Religion,* p. 50.

58. Both Feuerbach and Kant reached similar conclusions about the divinity of man: "*Man has his highest being, his God, in himself*; not in himself as an individual, but in his essential nature, his species." *Essence of Christianity,* p. 281. "Man is certainly unholy enough, but humanity in his person must be holy to him. Everything in creation which he wishes and over which he has power can be used merely as a means; only man, and, with him, every rational creature, is an end in itself. He is the subject of the moral law which is holy, because of the autonomy of his freedom." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason,* p. 90.

59. *Anthem,* p. 114.

60. *Ibid.,* p. 115.

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* [(Signet, 1967)], p. 322.

63. *Early Writings,* [translated and edited by T. B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill), [1843] 1963,] p. 206.

64. *Ibid.,* p. 166.

65. *Ibid.,* p. 165.

66. *Ibid.*

67. Karl Marx, Foreword to his doctoral dissertation: *The Difference Between the Nature Philosophy of Democritus and the Nature Philosophy of Epicurus,* in *Marx and Engels on Religion,* pp. 14-15. (The original Greek is quoted by Marx.)

68. Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics and Gnosticism,* pp. 36-37.

69. *Ibid.,* p. 37.

70. *Atlas Shrugged,* pp. 1025-1026. "Why were the men of Babel punished? Because they attempted to build a tower to the sky." Rand, *The Objectivist,* July 1971, p. 8.

71. *Anthem,* pp. 115-116.

72. Voegelin, *op. cit.,* p. 64.

73. The Communists (materialists) are quite as eager as Rand to defend Objective Reality. Lenin wrote, for instance, that:

> Once you deny objective reality, given us in sensation, you have already lost every one of your weapons against fideism, for you have slipped into agnosticism or subjectivism—and that is all fideism wants. If the perceptual world is objective reality, then the door is closed to every other "reality" or quasi-reality . . .
>
> (*Materialism and Empirio-Criticism,* p. 357.)

Engels has written that:

> . . . the material (*stofflich*), sensuously perceptible world to which we ourselves belong is the only reality; and that our consciousness and thinking, however suprasensuous they may seem, are the products of a material, bodily organ, the brain. Matter is not a product of mind, but mind itself is merely the highest product of matter. That is, of course, pure materialism.
>
> (*Ludwig Feuerbach,* in *Marx and Engels on Religion,* pp. 230-231.)

Again, Lenin:

> We ask, is a man given objective reality when he sees something red or feels something hard, etc., or not? . . . If you hold that it is not given, you . . . inevitably sink to subjectivism and agnosticism . . .
>
> If you hold that it is given, a philosophical concept is needed for this objective reality, and this concept has been worked out long, long ago. This concept is *matter.* Matter is a philosophical category designating the objective reality which is given to man by his sensations, and which is copied, photographed and reflected by our sensations, while existing independently of them.
>
> (*op. cit.,* p. 128.)

74. See, however, the discussions of "volitional consciousness" in chapters 2 and 4.

75. *Atlas Shrugged,* p. 1019.

76. *Ibid.,* p. 1026.

77. *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal,* p. 322.

78. Nathaniel Branden, *The Objectivist,* February 1966, p. 7.

79. Nathaniel Branden, *The Objectivist,* January 1966, p. 12.

80. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* [(St. Petersburg 1907)], p. 4.

81. Nathaniel Branden, *The Objectivist,* February 1966, p. 7. "In this issue, man is a *prime mover.*" *Loc. cit.,* March 1966, p. 13.

82. "'Free will',—in the widest sense of the term—is the doctrine which holds that man is capable of performing actions that are not determined by forces outside his control; that man has the power of making choices which are, causally, *primaries*—*i.e.,* not necessitated by antecedent factors." Nathaniel Branden, *The Objectivist Newsletter,* January 1964, p. 3. "A man's choice to focus is a primary, a *first cause* in consciousness." *Loc. cit.,* April 1964, p. 15.

83. "Fight for the essence of that which is man: for his sovereign rational mind." *Atlas Shrugged,* p. 1069.

84. See, for example, C. S. Lewis's *Miracles.*

85. The Objectivist position of the relationship between mind and pre-existing matter is indistinguishable from the general materialist position of the 19th century. Feuerbach wrote:

> My doctrine or view can therefore be summed up in two words: *nature* and *man.* The being which in my thinking man presupposes, the being which is the *cause* or *ground* of man, to which he owes his origin and existence, is *not God*—a mystical, indeterminate, ambiguous word—but *nature,* a clear sensuous, unambiguous word and thing. And the being in whom nature becomes personal, conscious, and rational is man. To my mind, unconscious nature is the eternal, uncreated being, the first being—first, that is, in time but not in rank, *physically* but not *morally*; man with his consciousness is for me second in time, but in rank the first."
>
> (*Lectures on the Essence of Religion,* p. 21)

Both Engels and Lenin rejected the "vulgar materialist" idea that the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile:

> One day we shall certainly "reduce" thought experimentally to molecular and chemical motions in the brain, but does that exhaust the essence of thought?
>
> (Engels, *Dialectics of Nature,* in Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism,* pp. 493-494)

Only the non-dialectical vulgar materialists "assumed that thought is secreted by the brain as bile is secreted by the liver," wrote Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism.*

86. C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man,* p. 72.

87. *Ibid.,* p. 68.

88. *Ibid.,* p. 69. "It is, of course, a commonplace to complain that men have hitherto used badly, and against their fellows, the powers that science has given them. But that is not the point I am trying to make. I am not speaking of the particular corruptions and abuses which an increase of moral virtue would cure: I am considering what the thing called 'Man's power over Nature' must always and essentially be."

89. ". . . religious abstractions are the product of man's mind, not of supernatural revelation." *The Objectivist,* March 1968, p. 4.

90. "The source of all contrasts between paganism and Christianity is the difference in their concepts of God. In any system the ultimate principle determines the form of the whole and shows its implications in the details of ethics, physics, and epistemology." Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey,* p. 183.

91. Lewis, op. cit., p. 71.

92. *Ibid.,* p. 77.

93. "They [the 'men of the mind'] had known that theirs was the power. I taught them that theirs was the glory." *Atlas Shrugged,* p. 1051.

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J. Charles King (essay date 1984)

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[*In the following essay, King reconstructs Rand's system of ethics and morality based on her theory of value, disagreeing with her assessment of the "ultimate value," namely life itself, and concluding that her argument "fails because of a confusion about the ultimate value and ends in themselves and because she has not seen correctly the connection between desire and the possibility of value."*]

There is no doubt that Ayn Rand's novels and philosophical writings have played an extremely important role in the recent resurgence of individualist and libertarian thought in the United States. Because Rand has written both fiction and philosophical essays, her influence has been felt in very different ways. For some she has provided an inspiring vision of a society of liberty and individualism through her fiction, particularly ***Atlas Shrugged.*** For others she has provided the main thrust of a philosophical justification for the advocacy of liberty and individualism.

While I acknowledge with gratitude the inspiration I have received from Ayn Rand's novels, I have never found the main line of her philosophical argument convincing. On the other hand, many persons whom I respect find it the most convincing line of argument concerning moral and political questions they have encountered. I thought that my own skepticism concerning Rand's basic ethical argument had been very well developed in Robert Nozick's article, "On the Randian Argument," and never, therefore, undertook further written criticism of it.[1]

However, in light of the reply to Nozick's paper published by Douglas Den Uyl and Douglas Rasmussen as "Nozick on the Randian Argument," it is clear that the Randian argument is in need of reconsideration.[2] Rather than reconstruct here the extensive disagreements between Nozick and Den Uyl and Rasmussen, I shall attempt a new examination of the Randian argument, stating it as I understand it and then subjecting it to those criticisms which lead me to believe it is inadequate. I shall do all of this, however, with the benefit of having read the essays already mentioned and shall, when appropriate, refer to these earlier essays.

The Randian Argument

Ayn Rand holds that *morality* or *ethics* is a code of values to guide man's choices and actions.[3] Ethics as a science she takes to be the discovery and definition of such a code. Her basic strategy for this discovery is to ask first what values are and why men need them. She believes that when these questions are answered, one then has the key to discover what is the *proper* code of values for human beings. Let us, therefore, examine her answers to these questions in turn.

Rand states that value is that which one acts to gain and/or keep. I take this to mean that whatever is the object of a goal-directed action is a value for that actor. In this connection we may do well to remember that one usually distinguishes between the *valued* and the *valu-*

able. The valued is whatever is actually sought by any individual, the valuable is what is worthy of being sought or what ought to be sought. Now I take it that Rand's is a characterization of the valued. Thus, she can reasonably say that the valued is what one acts to gain or keep. In a later step of the argument she provides us with the transition from the valued to the valuable.

She further holds that value is not a primitive concept but a concept that has at least two crucial presuppositions: (1) the existence of an entity that can act to achieve a goal, and (2) alternatives facing that entity. Den Uyl and Rasmussen suggest that these alternatives must make a difference to the entity in question.[4] This point is perhaps reinforced by Rand's use of the example of the indestructible robot. For the present, however, I will assume that this is merely unpacking what is meant by saying that an entity really faces alternatives in the first place.

Before going on to the important implications of these two points, we should also notice one other position about value that Rand advances. She characterizes an ultimate value as that final goal or end to which all lesser goals are the means. Further, she holds that without an ultimate value there can be no lesser goals or means, since a series of means going off into an infinite progression toward a nonexistent end is impossible. She says explicitly, "It is only an ultimate goal, an *end in itself,* that makes the existence of values possible" (**OE [“The Objectivist Ethics”]**, p. 17).

From the two presuppositions of value already explained, Rand argues that only living beings can have values, for only living beings are capable of meeting the two conditions at issue. Only living beings face genuine alternatives, because only living beings can cease to exist. Mere matter does not cease to exist. Its form may change but the matter remains. Life, however, is a process of self-generating and self-sustaining action. Living beings, thus, may be destroyed completely. They may die and simply cease to be the kind of thing they were. Thus, only living beings face this most basic alternative of existence or nonexistence. Living beings are thus the only things that are capable of goal-directed behavior. Rand seems, indeed, to make a connection here between the fact that living beings face the alternative of existence or nonexistence and the very possibility of goal-directed behavior. I find her explanation of the connection unclear, but the following reconstruction by Den Uyl and Rasmussen seems to be a reasonable one.

> There is a result that comes from achieving a goal and a result that comes from failing to achieve a goal (even if there is a lack of positive result). The difference in the result to the being who acted to achieve the goal determines, tells us, if the goal is achieved. What differentiates the results of goal-directed behavior? The most fundamental difference possible is the difference between existence and non-existence. If such a difference did not exist, if some being were not conditional, if an action could not result in the existence or non-existence of the entity that acted to achieve a goal, then there would be no differences in the results of achieving a goal or failing to. If there were no difference in result with respect to an entity existing or not existing, then what other differences could there be? What could make results differ if there were not this basic difference? None. Thus, it is the difference between a living being existing or not existing that creates all the other alternatives a living being faces, and it is because life is something that must be maintained that there are goals in the first place.[5]

The life of all organisms, Rand holds, depends upon two factors: (1) obtaining enough fuel for survival and (2) their own actions in the proper use of that fuel. In some living organisms these processes are more or less automatic. Human beings, however, are beings of volitional consciousness. Human beings must choose how they are to act. They do not automatically act in accordance with their nature. But because human beings must choose how to act, they need a code of values to guide them in their choices. Thus, I take it that we have been provided with Rand's answers to the two questions she originally suggested.

But if all of this is granted, then Rand holds that for any living being there can be only one possible ultimate value, namely the organism's life. The very continuation of its life depends upon what is required for its life as the kind of organism it is; thus, its life is its standard of value. But, as a being of volitional consciousness, man needs to choose the standard. What is automatic in other animals must be chosen by man. If a man asks about the proper choice, the answer is the same, his life. Man's life is therefore the ultimate value, that final goal toward which all other goals are directed. This ultimate value provides the standard of value of the objectivist ethics. For each individual human being, his own life will be the purpose of his life, that is, his own adaptation of the pursuit of the standard in his own individual case. As I understand her, Rand asserts that there is nothing arbitrary or due to man's choice in this fact that man's life is the ultimate standard of value. One may, of course, as has already been pointed out, choose to reject the standard; but in doing so, one rejects what is nevertheless necessarily one's own appropriate standard of value because of one's very nature as a human being.

If we ask why man's life must be taken as the standard of value, one understanding of the answer is simply that if one would survive, doing those things required by one's nature for survival is the only way to act. Notice that this answer seems contingent upon one's taking

survival as a goal. At least in Galt's speech this seems to me clearly to be the implication of what Rand says.[6] Den Uyl and Rasmussen, on the other hand, argue that one must necessarily choose life as an end.[7] It is not clear to me (especially in Galt's speech) that Rand takes this line, but the Den Uyl and Rasmussen interpretation is worth noting. They claim that:

> Given that life is a necessary condition for valuation, there is no other way we can value something without also (implicitly at least) valuing that which makes valuation possible. Paradoxically perhaps, we could value not living any longer, but in making such a value we must nevertheless value life. Death, a living thing not-being, does not require any actions for its maintenance. Death is not a positive way of being. Rather, it is a negation—the absence of being a living thing. It has no required actions; it has no needs. Death cannot be an ultimate value, then, simply because it does not require any actions and thus cannot be the reason or cause of goal-directed behavior. Therefore, we cannot "suppose" death or anything else (other than life) as the ultimate value, for the very activity of "holding something as a value," let alone as an ultimate one, depends on life being the ultimate value in the sense of "ultimate" discussed earlier. Thus there is an inconsistency in the request, "Prove life is valuable." The very meaning of "valuable" presupposes the value of life.[8]

Whichever interpretation one chooses here, it is clear that Rand holds there is only one appropriate standard of value for human beings—only one thing ultimately valuable, namely, man's life. But this standard requires further explanation. Rand makes it very clear that by valuing life a person does not simply hold onto life at any price; rather, one values one's life as the kind of thing a human being is, that is, a rational being. Survival as a man, then, means the survival of a rational being in those choices and alternatives open to such a being throughout a lifetime. The crucial point to understand here is that the standard of man's life implies the standard of a rational being. Reason, according to Rand, is the faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by the senses. It is the faculty of reason and its process, thinking, that makes possible the survival of human beings. Human beings do not automatically use this faculty, which makes it possible for them to continue their life. It is a faculty one must choose to use. Nonetheless it is the defining faculty of human beings. The process of employing concepts to deal with reality is the process that makes human life possible. It is the process that defines what it is to survive as a human being. Thus it gives us the key to understanding what is meant in the objectivist standard, which holds that man's life is the ultimate value.

In the essay **"The Objectivist Ethics,"** Rand goes on to employ this standard of value to explain the resulting view of the virtues and of the foundations of rights. I shall examine her views on those two topics in the final section of this essay. For the present, however, I wish to concentrate on that portion of the argument already presented, since the argument to the conclusion that life is the ultimate standard of value is the portion of the argument to which I want to direct primary critical attention.

Desire and the Theory of Value

In this section I want to state as clearly, precisely, and concisely as possible my reasons for finding the Randian argument unconvincing. To do so I must first call attention to a confusion that exists in Rand's terminology as well as in the terminology of Den Uyl and Rasmussen.[9] Rand says explicitly, "It is only an ultimate goal, *an end in itself,* that makes existence of values possible" (**OE,** p. 17). The argument she goes on to present to show that there must be an ultimate value depends upon the same identification of "ultimate value" with "end in itself." But the concept of ultimate value should be distinguished from the concept of an end in itself. To be sure, if there is in any system of values an ultimate value, then that ultimate value will be an end in itself. But there may be in a system of values no ultimate value whatever, while there are any number of ends in themselves. Simply put, an end in itself is something that is desired for its own sake, not merely as a means to something else.

It is true that any system of values must contain at least one end in itself. It might well be, for example, that I value health as an end in itself, that I value pleasant companionship as an end in itself, that I value pride as an end in itself. The point is just this, I may well take any number of things as ends in themselves without having to admit thereby that any one of them is the ultimate value, that is, the one value in terms of which the value of all others can be explained. My valuing of health as an end in itself might simply be unrelated to my valuing pride as an end in itself.

If I am to reach rational decisions, I will need to have some kind of ranking order between values; but from the fact that something is an end in itself, it does not follow that it cannot be more or less valued than another thing that is also an end in itself. Thus, the organization of a code of values, while it may depend upon the existence of ends in themselves, does not depend upon the existence of an ultimate value. The claim that there must be an ultimate value, if there is to be any value at all, is therefore mistaken.

There may be in a particular system of values an ultimate value. It might happen that a system of values is so arranged as to lead to one final end in itself, one thing toward which all other values are aimed. But it does not follow that there *must* be an ultimate value if there is to be any value at all, as both Rand and Den Uyl and Rasmussen suppose. We do not, therefore, in

choosing a code of values, face the choice of choosing life or else some other thing as the ultimate value. A code of values may admit of any number of ends in themselves and may not be organized so that one particular value plays the role that Rand assigned to ultimate value.

With this objection as background, I can—I think—make clear my next and chief objection to Rand's account concerning life and value. This requires a return to the point of the connection Rand seems to make between the fact that living beings face the alternative of existence and nonexistence and the very possibility of goal-directed behavior. In the passage quoted earlier, Den Uyl and Rasmussen say explicitly that if there were no difference in result with respect to an entity's existing or nonexisting, there could be no other differences. This does seem to be a fair interpretation of Rand's invitation to imagine an immortal and indestructible robot in order to make clear the point that it is only to a living entity that things can be good or evil (**OE,** p. 16). She invites us to suppose that the robot cannot be affected by anything, cannot be changed in any respect, cannot be damaged, injured, or destroyed.

The robot example is ambiguous in just the following way. If we take the Den Uyl—Rasmussen interpretation, the crucial point is that the robot cannot be destroyed. If we take Rand's words literally, however, perhaps we are to think that the robot is not affected in *any way whatever.* The example is plausible if, in thinking the robot cannot be affected in any way whatever, we mean that the robot either does not *know* or does not *care* what happens to things around it. But, of course, if the robot neither knows nor cares, the example seems uninteresting.

Den Uyl and Rasmussen are simply mistaken in supposing that alternatives could not make a difference to an entity that did not face the difference between existing and not existing. Simply imagine that one suddenly finds, through whatever means, that one has been made immortal. One cannot be destroyed no matter what. Perhaps one's body has been impregnated with a chemical from a strange planet that renders one's tissues impervious to disruption of their structure from any force existing in the universe. There is no reason in supposing this hypothesis of indestructibility that we would then lose all interest in what is going on around us. Even if we knew that we were ourselves indestructible, we might still find some persons sexually attractive; we might still like to eat (to be sure, on the hypothesis that even if we didn't eat, we would still survive; but we might, after all, simply enjoy the taste of a good steak); we might still enjoy the pleasures of the bottle; we might still enjoy the association of friends; we might still be interested in philosophical problems and so on ad infinitum. The mere removal of the possibility of destruction would not remove a whole range of the interests or desires of ordinary human life. Thus, it would be quite possible for one who is totally indestructible, nevertheless, to have a very rich system of values.

Now I emphasize that these aforementioned values would be values on Rand's own view in that these would be things the being would act to gain or keep. If we return then to the robot example, we see why the example as given in **"The Objectivist Ethics"** is confusing, for the inclusion of the provision that the robot is not affected by anything might lead one to believe that the robot feels no desires, feels no satisfaction or pleasure, simply does not care about anything. In that case, of course, one cannot imagine that the robot would have any values. But even though the robot is indestructible, as soon as we suppose the robot might have preferences or desires, or, to put it another way, might care about one thing or another, whatever it may be (perhaps simply admires a particular landscape and would like to preserve it or simply sit and look at it), then the robot can view things as for and against him and can in fact have values. Strictly speaking, then, the question of destructibility or indestructibility is irrelevant as to whether a being can have values.

What a being must have to have value is, rather, the capacity for desire or preference or interest or caring. Any of the number of terms can be chosen. For convenience I shall refer simply to the capacity for desire.[10] Thus, if the being is able to desire some circumstances rather than others, that being is able to have values. To be sure, the only beings we know of that we are certain to have these capacities are living beings. In that respect then, it is perfectly true to say that in our experience the activity of valuing presupposes a living being and thus presupposes life.

But, of course, it cannot follow from those mere facts that life will be the standard of value itself. Once one sees it is the possibility of desiring that is crucial for a being to be able to value, then one sees that, while life may be one among other values a being holds, it need have no privileged place. Of course, to most of us life is very high on our ordering of preferences and is, indeed, among the various things we want for their own sakes. But history records many individuals who, even if they could have continued to live what might be called a rational existence in Rand's terms, would nevertheless have preferred to sacrifice their own life to bring about some greater value. The point of this is simply that value finds its beginning in desire, not merely in the process of life that in our experience gives rise to desire. Desire enables one to value even things that transcend, in one way or another, one's own span of life.

Den Uyl and Rasmussen will apparently want to argue that the point of view just presented is in some way in-

ternally inconsistent, because they hold that since life is a necessary condition for the activity of valuation there is no way that one can value anything without also, implicitly at least, valuing that which makes valuation possible. It is important to note that, even were this argument acceptable, it would only succeed in showing that life was always a value as a *means,* not that life was always an end in itself or certainly not that life was always an ultimate end. When one sees this, one may then grant to Den Uyl and Rasmussen that at the time one is placing a value on something one must admit that to the extent one valued having placed a value on that thing, then one valued life as a means, since it was the condition that enabled one to place a value on the thing at all. But, of course, all of this would only show that life was grudgingly acknowledged to be valuable as a means to an end; and it would be, after all, the end one was valuing. This object of one's desire would be what made life itself a value.

Thus, the Den Uyl and Rasmussen version of the argument connecting the fact of the destructibility of human beings with their having to take life as an ultimate value does not work. But one may take the other possible version, namely, that life has to be the standard of value if one wishes life to continue (which may or may not be the version contained in Galt's speech). There is, however, no particular reason for me to have to deny this version save for this: once again one would thereby admit only that life was an instrumental value. If what makes me want to stay alive is to play golf as often as possible, it is the fact that I take playing golf as an end in itself and an ultimate value that leads me to place a value on life, not the other way around. The mere fact that I must be alive to play golf makes life only an instrumental value not an ultimate value or an end in itself.

Thus, no matter which of the two interpretations one takes, Rand neither succeeds in proving that life is the ultimate value nor proves that man's life is the objective standard of value for all men. Her argument fails because of a confusion about ultimate value and ends in themselves and because she has not seen correctly the connection between desire and the possibility of value.

In making these claims I would not be misunderstood. I am not in any sense arguing that death is a value, that I myself do not place a high value on my own life, that I do not think other persons should place high values on their lives, or that I disagree with Rand when she points out the strictures of reality facing the choices of each and every human being. She is, of course, quite right in pointing out that various conditions are necessary for human life to continue. To live we must have food and, in many climates, shelter, as well as various other essentials. These do not grow on trees; they must be earned through productive work. If one does not do the work oneself, one can, of course, survive only by profiting from the efforts of others. On all these points, which Rand makes with great clarity and force, I agree that she is entirely right. Nonetheless, one may admit these points and take them as important in developing moral theory and social theory without accepting Rand's main argument in the theory of value. My criticism is directed only at the claim that she shows life to be the appropriate standard of value for all human beings. That argument I have shown to be mistaken.

I should like to turn now to a further criticism of the next step in Rand's argument, namely, the claim that the kind of life that provides the standard for human beings is life as a rational being, not mere survival. I turn to this because someone might suppose that in arguing against the Den Uyl and Rasmussen interpretation of the importance of survival, however well substantiated in Rand's text, I have not argued against Rand's most important argument. My previous comments have been directed at her general claim that for organisms of all kinds, including man, life would be the standard of value. The most specific question of the appropriate standard for human beings is, of course, answered by her to be the standard of man's life as a rational being. I wish, therefore, to turn my critical attention now to her explanation of the meaning of that standard.

On Rand's account, reason is a faculty of human beings. It is the faculty that directs the process of making use of concepts to discover reality. The process the faculty of reason directs she calls thinking. She says, "Reason is the faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by man's senses" (**OE,** p. 20). On her view, however, reason is a faculty a human being may choose to exercise or not. When a human being fully exercises reason, the mind is focused to a full awareness of reality. If one chooses not to use one's reason fully, then to varying degrees one unfocuses the mind. In discussing the virtue of rationality, Rand goes on to add that reason is one's only source of knowledge, one's only judge of values and one's only guide to action (p. 25). When she says, then, that the ultimate standard of value is man's life *qua man,* she means that the standard is the life of a human being as a rational creature, that is, the life of a human being with mind focused to grasp the facts of reality. On her account this is the same as to say the life of a human being with reason fully employed. Since this is the fully human life according to her, with the life of a creature whose mind is less focused being in some way subhuman, it follows that when she says "man's life *qua* man" she means the life of rationality.

Unfortunately it seems that there is a considerable ambiguity in what we are to understand here as being reason or a rational life. Among other possible interpreta-

tions of the concepts of reason and rationality in the philosophical tradition, one can recognize two that may be of some help at this point. Some thinkers have conceived of reason as that faculty of human beings which enables them to grasp the nature of the world around them in a strictly factual or descriptive sense. Thinkers have sometimes applied the term *theoretical reason* to this understanding of reason. The important point about this understanding of reason is that it sees reason as a faculty devoted to building a picture of the way the world *is*. This seems to be the kind of conception of reason Rand endorses when she calls reason a faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by the senses (**OE,** p. 20). It is important to note, however, that if one takes this kind of conception of reason literally, then reason sets no goals and, in fact, can motivate no actions. Reason is, as it were, an information machine on this kind of conception.

On the other hand, reason and rationality are in some philosophies treated in a way much more nearly related to the goals or ends that human beings may pursue in life. Rather than being understood as merely an information gathering machine, reason may be understood in Hume's phrase as the *slave of the passions.* That is to say, reason may be seen as a faculty that enables one to calculate the most effective means to attain ends taken as given. This is obviously a conception of reason very close to that of the pure information gathering machine, although in this case the gathering of the information is seen as guided by changing ends rather than simply as proceeding along a path set for the faculty involved to gather as much information and understanding as possible. The point to note about both of these conceptions of reason, however, is that the faculty of desire or inclination remains separate from reason on either account. On the second account, which is more concerned with action, ends are taken simply as given. On the first account no mention at that level need be made of how action comes about, since theoretical reason is a faculty for the gathering of knowledge. Rand, however, holds that reason is a guide to conduct and that reason enables one to choose values (**OE,** p. 25). On the account of reason she has given, however, whether we interpret it in either of the ways I have suggested, reason simply cannot be a guide to conduct in any complete sense. I say "in any complete sense" because reason must be taken to be able to be a judge of ends as well, if it is to be able to guide conduct completely.

To explain my objections here, I wish to distinguish between two conceptions of a guide. Consider that you are in a strange country and you wish to reach a certain city. You might then hire a guide, saying to him, "I wish to reach such and such a city as quickly as possible; please guide me there." On the other hand, if one is in a strange country, knows very little about that country, and has no idea where to go, one might hire a guide, saying to him, "Choose those places that you think would be most interesting for a visitor to see and then take me to them." Notice that the first conception of a guide is one in which the end is completely set and the guide merely chooses the path to attain the end. In the second conception the guide is left open to choose the ends to be attained as well as the paths to be taken in attaining those ends.

Now, in any conception of reason that considers reason to be the faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by man's senses, reason can serve as a guide only in the first and not in the second sense. If reason is to be confined as merely gathering knowledge of what is, it cannot set goals. The setting of goals will have to be done by desire or inclination. To be sure, desire or inclination may be influenced by what reason tells us about the nature of the paths to certain goals or about the goals themselves, but nonetheless the decision to go in one direction rather than another will have ultimately to rest on desire or inclination.

Reason in either of the two senses I outlined earlier could be taken as expressive of Rand's view, when she calls reason a faculty that integrates and identifies the material provided by the senses. But in neither of those cases is reason able to play the part of a guide that sets the goal to be attained. To allow that task to reason stretches reason from being a faculty which gathers information to being a faculty which approves or disapproves. But, of course, to go so far is to lose the advantage of a faculty account and to return only to the notion of reason as like a little man in the head.

Of course, we know that people can calculate ways both to attain ends and to adopt ends. If reason becomes merely another shadowy person in the head who can do all that real people can, then of course it can do both of these things. If, on the other hand, reason is to be a separate faculty, that is, an identifiable aspect of the activities possible to a human being, then reason, if characterized as an information gathering faculty or a faculty that identifies and integrates the material of the senses, cannot be conceived also as a faculty that sets goals.

This brings us back to the point of criticism raised earlier, that Ayn Rand's account allows an insufficient place for the importance of the activities of preferring, desiring, and the like. I repeat, it is true that such things as desiring and preferring may well be informed by the information gathered by reason. Nonetheless reason, as Rand has explained it, cannot provide motivation toward one alternative or another.

The implication of these problems concerning reason is that Rand's account of the standard of the value of man's life, qua rational creature, would provide us,

strictly speaking, no actual standard of action at all. For reason must be provided with ends to seek before it can serve as a guide. These ends must come from outside reason itself. Therefore, to set as a standard for action the life of a rational being is to set no determinate standard at all.

I am quite aware that proponents of Rand's argument may reply that my conception of reason here is too narrow, that it is positivistic or that it has fallen prey to some other awful philosophical disease. The fact is, however, that the account Rand gives of reason in **"The Objectivist Ethics"** is an account of reason as a faculty that gathers information. If one takes an account of that sort, then the argument I have advanced follows. Of course, one may try to broaden the account of reason; but in my experience I find attempts so to broaden the account turn out to make reason a shadowy entity that can perform all the usual functions of an actual human being and thus is of doubtful explanatory value. The notion of reason as a faculty, as one aspect of what human beings can do, might have some explanatory value; but simply as a shadowy thing or an all-purpose faculty that can do the things that human beings can do, it is, of course, a piece of metaphysical spare baggage.

Finally, I would hasten to point out that I take up the whole question of treating reason as a faculty of human beings only because it is treated that way in Ayn Rand's work. I would prefer to regard reasoning simply as one of the activities of which human beings are capable, not necessarily to be attributed to some particular faculty of human beings. I am quite willing to admit a good deal of ignorance as to why human beings are capable of some of the activities of which they are capable. We do have, however, a fair amount of information about how it is that human beings can do many of the things they can do. In any case, it is clear that one of the things human beings can do is gather information about the way the world is. They can also profitably bring that information to bear upon choice of the ways to seek their ends and upon choice of ends themselves. However, the fact always remains that when all the information has been gathered, a human being must choose the path he or she prefers to take. That ultimate question cannot be answered by reasoning, because it is not a question of obtaining more information. Even if, as never happens, one had all the information available, one would still in the end have to choose where one wants to go.

As a consequence of the difficulties I have outlined, I am satisfied that the Randian argument is not successful in proving either that life is the ultimate standard of value or that man's life qua rational being is the standard of human beings. There are, however, other issues of considerable interest mentioned in **"The Objectivist Ethics."** In the next section I would like to discuss two of them briefly.

Virtues and Rights

In taking a broad overview of the points I have been arguing, I would suggest that part of the problem in Ayn Rand's argument has been the fact that she has tried to find a way to make one important human motivation the central and overriding motivation of all appropriate conceptions of the human good. Thus, in attempting to make life the standard of value, she has presented a conception of value that is too narrow to present itself as a standard for many persons who do not fall under her strictures of adopting a subhuman attitude of failing to focus their mind fully and clearly. I might perhaps illustrate this point by appeal to one issue in regard to her discussion of the virtues.

In discussing the virtues of rationality, productiveness, and pride, Rand says, "Productive work is the *central* purpose of a rational man's life, the central value that integrates and determines the hierarchy of all his other values" (**OE,** p. 25). Now, productive work certainly is essential for the survival of any human being. Furthermore, for many human beings productive work may well be the central purpose of life. It is, however, much too narrow to say that productive work is the central purpose of the life of anyone who is rational.

Consider the person who conducts his life in the following manner. From the years twenty to thirty he works very hard. He arranges his life in such a way that work consumes the greater part of his life, but he does this to earn as much profit as possible as quickly as possible. Suppose that by the age of thirty he has amassed a considerable amount of wealth. Suppose that what he does then is invest his wealth well. He buys stock in Taggart Transcontinental or makes large deposits in a bank run by Midas Mulligan. As a result he has sufficient income to live quite comfortably for the rest of his life, and in the beginning of this thirtieth year he makes the central purpose of his life not further productive work, but the elusive quest for par. Suppose he spends most of his time playing golf or practicing golf, attempting to improve his game.

In what respect are we entitled to say that this man is no longer rational; in what respect, in fact, according to the standards one finds in Rand's writings, are we entitled to view him as some kind of parasite? If he has made investments that represent a voluntary, trader relationship for obtaining his income, he is not to be viewed as a parasite on the person who runs a railroad or the person who operates a bank. That person freely chooses to engage in those activities and has freely chosen to accept an investment to promote the activities in which he or she is interested. Thus, there is no reason to call this golfer either irrational or a parasite.

Nonetheless, I see no reason to suppose that productive work is the central purpose of his life. By hypothesis, playing a game is the central purpose of his life. One

may well say, "Ah, yes, but for those ten years productive work had to be the central purpose of his life." Not necessarily so! The central purpose of his life may always have been to able to live the life he lives now; but to attain that, he worked very hard for those ten years to amass the required wealth.

It follows from the foregoing example that productive work simply need not be the central purpose in the life of a rational person. The person in the story is perfectly rational. He has taken account of the facts of reality in order to pursue his own ends. It is pointless to say against him that if everyone did that his course would be impossible. Of course, it would be impossible if everyone did it. Doing most things would be impossible if everyone did them. The point is that he has used his reason to calculate that others will act in particular ways and that they are to be trusted to keep their agreements, and he has therefore acted upon these facts of reality. He is neither irrational, immoral, nor a parasite. It seems clear that he is a person for whom Ayn Rand would feel little admiration. He is doubtlessly far removed from Hank Rearden or Dagney Taggart. But surely the difference is a difference in *taste,* a difference in the kind of life and activity Rand admires and desires, as opposed to the kind of life and activity our hypothetical golfer likes and admires. But that difference is one of taste, not one of failure to abide by some objective standard. Thus it illustrates the difficulty into which Rand falls from her desire to provide an objective standard of value.

Surely the question between our golfer and Ayn Rand's conception need not be settled by saying that one is objectively right and the other is objectively wrong or that one is objectively virtuous and the other objectively vicious. Is it not far more reasonable simply to say that different persons may reasonably value differing kinds of activity? The point about our golfer is that he has not behaved in ways that even Rand need proscribe in attaining the ends he seeks. It is needless, then, for her account of values to impose such a narrow set of constraints upon the kind of life that may rationally be chosen. To be sure, writing in the context in which she was writing, the desire to find an objective standard of value is understandable; nonetheless, our leisurely golfer makes clear, I think, the way in which Rand has been led to an overly narrow conception of values.

Finally, I would mention that my claims that Rand is not entirely clear in her use of the expressions *ultimate value* and *end in itself* are further substantiated when one notices what she has to say in **"The Objectivist Ethics"** about the basic *social* principle of her view. She says her basic social principle is that every living human being is an end in himself, just as life is an end in itself (p. 25). She further explains that this means that human beings are not the means to the ends or welfare of others and that they must therefore live for their own sakes. I must admit that I remain entirely puzzled as to how this use of the concept of an end in itself will help her to justify a political philosophy.

My puzzlement is not abated by reading Ayn Rand's other works, including the essay entitled **"Man's Rights."**[1] Rand says that each human being is to be regarded as an end in himself, just as life is an end in itself; but I find no interpretation to put on this suggestion to make it plausible. When we are thinking of each person thinking about his own life, there is, of course, a certain plausibility to saying that each of us finds our life an end in itself; although as I have made clear, I am inclined to doubt that this is necessarily a general truth. Nonetheless, I can see no reason why each of us must regard the other as an end in himself or herself. The notion of an end in itself will be of value for political philosophy or as a social principle only if we are given such a reason.

I could understand an argument to the effect that, when each of us takes our own life as our purpose and man's life as the standard, reason shows us that the only way successfully to pursue our own goals is to exercise the kind of restraint in regard to others that we would hope for them to exercise in regard to us. Obviously this thought could be developed in various ways, and it is not important to follow out a particular one for present purposes. As far as I can see, however, the notion of an end in itself is of no particular value in making the kind of argument I envision here. I must say, therefore, that I remain puzzled as to how Rand believes the notion of regarding each person as an end in himself or herself is in some way related to regarding life as an end in itself. This confirms for me that there is a lack of clarity in her understanding of the notions *end in itself* and *ultimate value* that play a mischievous role in her basic argument, as I have already attempted to show.

Conclusion

There are many interesting and helpful points in Ayn Rand's philosophical writings that I have not mentioned. I have been guided by a desire to state clearly my reasons for disagreeing with her central argument concerning life and the theory of value. I believe I have shown reason to reject her argument that man's life is the standard of value.

If, however, one respects and admires Ayn Rand's work as I do, one feels a special desire to point out that reasoned criticism is a high compliment to pay to the work of a philosopher. When criticizing the work of most philosophers, such a disclaimer is unnecessary, but Rand has been treated with such prejudice and disrespect by most intellectuals that I feel it is important to make it clear that my disagreement is not of that order. I have

been moved and instructed by her fiction and have read her philosophy with profit. Nevertheless, for the reasons I have explained, I believe that the Randian argument is unsound.

Notes

1. Robert Nozick, "On the Randian Argument," *The Personalist* 52 (Spring 1971): 282-304.
2. Douglas Den Uyl and Douglas Rasmussen, "Nozick on the Randian Argument," ibid., 59 (April 1978): 184-205.
3. In interpreting Rand's argument, I have relied primarily on the essay "The Objectivist Ethics," in Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet Books, 1964), pp. 13-35. Further references to this work appear with the abbreviation OE and page number within parentheses in the text. When I refer to other works, a citation is provided; otherwise I am relying on this essay and have provided citations only for direct quotations or particularly controversial claims.
4. Den Uyl and Rasmussen, "Nozick on the Randian Argument," p. 190.
5. Ibid.
6. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Signet Books, 1957), p. 940.
7. Den Uyl and Rasmussen, "Nozick on the Randian Argument," p. 191.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., pp. 190-91.
10. I would not be understood to assert that these terms are synonymous. In fact, there are many differences between them in ordinary language. I assert only that they are similar enough that any of them may be chosen to make my point here. Which one prefers will depend on how one treats other philosophical issues that are not being debated here.
11. Ayn Rand, "Man's Rights," in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: Signet Books, 1967), pp. 320-28.

Douglas Den Uyl and Douglas B. Rasmussen (essay date 1984)

SOURCE: Den Uyl, Douglas and Douglas B. Rasmussen. "Capitalism." In *The Philosophic Thought of Ayn Rand,* edited by Douglas J. Den Uyl and Douglas B. Rasmussen, pp. 165-82. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1984.

[*In the following essay, Den Uyl and Rasmussen explain Rand's concept of capitalism, emphasizing its essential relationship to her theory of individual rights and stating that, for Rand, the "essence" of capitalism "is represented by a moral rather than an economic doctrine."*]

With the possible exception of her ethical views, Ayn Rand's political philosophy is the most notorious feature of her philosophic system. Her unabashed defense of laissez-faire capitalism coupled with a firm denunciation of all forms of collectivism has made her political positions the object of widespread critical attack. Nevertheless, most of the criticisms leveled at Rand's political theories lack an appreciation of the philosophic foundations that support the theory. Whether Rand is wrong or right in her conclusions, any objective reader of her political writings must admit: (1) that her political views flow from a comprehensive philosophy of man and nature, and (2) that her defense of capitalism is insightful and original. The latter point should become evident as we outline Rand's political theory below. A brief discussion of the first point is the natural place to begin that outline.

Rand's political theory centers around her doctrine of human rights. Yet human rights must themselves be understood in light of a prior moral theory. Consider the following passage from Rand.

> "Rights" are a moral concept—the concept that provides a logical transition from the principles guiding an individual's actions to the principles guiding his relationship with others—the concept that preserves and protects individual morality in a social context—the link between the moral code of a man and the legal code of a society, between ethics and politics. *Individual rights are a means of subordinating society to moral law.*[1]

Notice that to understand Rand's theory of rights one must first grasp her ethical doctrine and that to grasp her ethical theory one must appreciate her philosophy of man.

In the preceding introductory essays, Rand's theory of human nature was discussed in some detail. In those sections we learned that the mode of activity appropriate to and necessary for human existence is the use of our rational (i.e., conceptual) capacity. This capacity was seen as the foundation for all *human* acts and institutions. Rand's essentially Aristotelian conception of man is modified by her heavy emphasis on the *creative* power of the human mind. Since human beings are not omniscient or infallible, their success in life depends upon their ability to increase their knowledge. The degree to which one's knowledge increases is a function of one's ability to effectively solve the problems confronted. There is no static set of rules that, if followed, will lead automatically to new insights into a given problem. To be sure, there are epistemological con-

straints, but the creative mind is one that looks beyond the common understanding. Men of genius in both the sciences and the arts are those who do not allow themselves to be held down by received wisdom. In both Rand's fictional and nonfictional writings the creative mind is presented as the motive force of all human progress.[2] Stagnation is synonymous with death, and thus human creativity and innovation must be protected at all cost.

One may justifiably conclude that Rand's doctrine of rights is designed to secure those conditions necessary for the operation of the most significant asset of human nature—the mind. There is ample evidence that Rand links her theory of rights with her conception of human nature. In an article entitled **"Man's Rights,"** for example, she says that "the source of rights is man's nature" and that "rights are a necessary condition of his [man's] particular mode of survival."[3] Elsewhere Rand argues that "it is the basic, metaphysical fact of man's nature—the connection between his survival and his use of reason—that capitalism recognizes and protects."[4] Capitalism is itself "a social system based on the recognition of individual rights."[5]

Reason for Rand is the ability to conceptualize the material provided by the senses.[6] Our survival as human beings depends upon our ability to conceptually attend to the world, to properly interpret and judge the data we confront at each waking moment. The fundamental choice human beings make is whether to direct our full attention to the situations we experience.[7]

If we now add together the foregoing remarks about the choice to think and the creative element of thought necessary for progress, we shall gain a clearer understanding of Rand's doctrine of rights. When Rand claims that rights specify norms necessary for man's survival qua man, she does not mean that any violation of rights results in instant death. Rather, she means that the principle implied by a rights violation is contrary to the principles required for human life. Since men are (and must be) creatures that act and think in terms of principles,[8] a doctrine of rights is meant to insure that the choice to live by those principles required for human life is not impeded by other human beings. Both the choice to think and the creative element of thought are characterized by a process that is volitional and judgmental. What must, therefore, be insured by a system of rights is that those actions not be permitted which limit or destroy the free operation of choice and judgment in action; for any other principle of action would necessarily imply that something besides choice and judgment be the fundamental norm for human action. All this is to say that the moral propriety of attending to the world through the use of our conceptual faculty requires the freedom to act on our judgment. The right of free choice means the right to act on our choices.

Rand argues, as we have seen, that the fundamental alternative facing living things is existence or nonexistence. In the case of human beings, those courses of action necessary for the furtherance of our existence are not automatically determined. Because we are given no automatic means for the furtherance of our lives, we are bound[9] to make choices about which course of action to take. Ethics may give us certain objective standards for the guidance of those choices, but ethics cannot directly dictate how to apply those standards in particular concrete cases. Ethical rules do not tell us *when* we are in a situation that calls for one or another of the rules.[10] We must, therefore, use our judgment in those particular cases and choose accordingly.[11] It is appropriate to conclude, then, that the volitional nature of man's consciousness implies a principle of freedom. To act as if there is some substitute for this volitional feature of human nature is to ignore a fundamental metaphysical fact about our nature.

Now there are numerous ways in which an individual can act that imply principles contrary to the volitional principle just discussed. One such way is to act on the basis of faith.[12] But in the interpersonal realm it is coercion that represents the most significant violation of the volitional principle. Coercion is the attempt to substitute force for judgment and choice—"force and mind are opposites; morality ends where a gun begins."[13] Coercion implies that an independent assessment of the facts is unnecessary and that we can accomplish the business of living a human life by circumventing the necessity of judgment and choice. Since coercive acts violate the volitional principle, rights are meant to be those principles that protect freedom of judgment. Rand puts it this way:

> Thus for every individual, a right is the moral sanction of a *positive*—of his freedom to act on his own judgment, for his own goals, by his own *voluntary*, uncoerced choice. As to his neighbors, his rights impose no obligations on them except of a *negative* kind: to abstain from violating his rights.[14]

In essence then, the indispensability of judgment and choice for human existence is given its social expression in Rand's doctrine of individual rights.

It should also be noted at this stage of our discussion that one implication of Rand's view of choice is that choice becomes the foundation for virtue in society. In order to attribute moral worth to an individual's actions it is necessary that the individual be a moral agent, i.e., that his actions be chosen. Liberty is inherently connected with the process of moral perfection. Tibor Machan has made this point in the following way:

> The choice to learn, to judge, to evaluate, to appraise, to decide what he ought to do in order to live his life must be each person's own, otherwise he simply has no

> opportunity to excel or fail at the task. His moral aspirations cannot be fulfilled (or left unfulfilled) if he is not the source of his own actions, if they are imposed or forced upon him by others.[15]

The implication of the preceding remarks for social theory is that even though freedom permits evil actions as well as good ones, the *only* way a society can properly be seen as moral is if its members *choose* the good.[16]

Life, by its very nature, is not guaranteed. In recognition of this metaphysical fact, Rand holds that rights are freedoms of action and not guarantees of anything. Even property rights are not conceived by her to be rights to things, but only the freedom to pursue courses of action with respect to material goods.[17] A system or theory of rights that gives the pretense of guaranteeing certain goods is neither a consistent practice nor a coherent theory. If certain goods are to be guaranteed to individuals—as modern "welfare" rights would have it—some people must be coerced to provide for others. Apart from the fact that what is guaranteed is conditional upon the productivity of some (and hence no guarantee at all), there is in principle no limit to what one could claim must be guaranteed. If the Democratic Party Platform of 1960 can demand that everyone have a right to a "decent home,"[18] then there is virtually nothing human beings desire that cannot also be "guaranteed." But this view of rights makes a mockery of the notion of a guarantee; for if there is no object to which one may not claim a right, then we could conceivably ask the state to guarantee all things equally to everyone.[19]

Even if we were to ignore the foregoing remarks, there are further problems with a welfare conception of rights. In the first place, few arguments are ever advanced for why the coercive apparatus of the state should be the vehicle for guaranteeing certain goods to individuals. It is not enough to assume that the state should provide the goods demanded. One must *show* why initiatory acts of force by the state are not subject to the same moral condemnation we apply to individuals who take such actions. Furthermore, it is imperative to recognize that the welfare conception of rights is inherently discriminatory. That conception of rights demands that the state treat some individuals differently from others, depending on their particular status in society at a particular time (e.g., whether they are rich or poor). Since one's status in society may change over time, the only guarantee we have is that we cannot expect consistent treatment in the course of our lifetime. Robert Nozick makes this very point in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia.*[20] Finally, despite any rhetoric to the contrary, welfare rights do not suppose that people possess rights, but rather that rights are gifts of the state. And like all gifts, the one who has the power to make the gift also has the power to take it away.

Rand's theory of rights avoids the preceding theoretical problems, since all individuals possess the same right to freely pursue their own goals—though there is no guarantee that they will be successful in that pursuit. Since no guarantees are given in nature that men will lead successful lives, it is a kind of metaphysical fraud to act as if this fact were not true in social life. The best we can do is try to establish those *conditions* that will allow for the pursuit of a proper human life, if people so choose to seek that end.[21] Establishing these conditions can be done without reference to anyone's particular circumstances—that is, equally.

It may appear as though Rand is just asking the state to guarantee a different set of goods from those demanded by welfare-rights advocates. One must keep in mind, however, that there is an important difference between a reactive course of action and an assertive one. In Rand's scheme, the state reacts to rights violations—it does not assert itself in the creation of rights. It might be said that the state protects those rights we possess by nature, rather than acting as the instrument of their creation. In other words, the state acts on the recognition of a moral truth, rather than merely stipulating a mode of behavior. Herein lies one reason for considering Rand a natural-rights theorist.

Although we have sketched the basic elements of Rand's theory of rights, we have yet to speak of the importance she attaches to property rights. It has already been noted that her conception of property rights means the right to certain courses of action rather than to particular things. In this sense property rights reduce to the right to life—that is, the right of an individual to pursue courses of action he deems best, provided he does not coercively interact with others. Yet the special importance Rand accords to property rights is expressed in the following passage:

> The right to life is the source of all rights—and the right to property is their only implementation. Without property rights, no other rights are possible. Since man has to sustain his life by his own effort, the man who has no right to the product of his effort has no means to sustain his life. The man who produces while others dispose of his product is a slave.[22]

Since human beings are material entities that require material goods to sustain their existence, the use, creation, and disposal of material things must be permitted. Moreover, Rand holds that only individuals act; collectivities are in no sense individuals and cannot act as such. Collectivities, therefore, possess no rights.[23] Since rights specify freedom of action and collectivities do not act, property rights are rights possessed by individuals. Individuals can, of course, form groups and consent to be treated *as if* they were one individual (e.g., a corporation), but this does not detract from the essential truth that rights belong to individual human beings.

But what does it mean to say that an individual has a right to property? In the first place, it means that the individual must not be kept from seeking material goods. Second and more important, the individual must be free to utilize those goods he has noncoercively acquired as he sees fit; for otherwise we have violated the already established principle that it is impermissible to restrict another's freedom of action by the initiation of force. Thus, when Rand says that "without property rights, no other rights are possible," she means simply that freedom of action with respect to material goods is the only way to make manifest the basic right to life. To coercively restrict someone's freedom of action is to say, in effect, that one is free to judge but not to act on one's judgment. This is to advance the principle that there is no necessary connection for human existence between judgments about a course of action and the overt actions implied by those judgments. It would be wrong to suppose that one's judgment about a course of action will necessarily be life-enhancing when the action is performed. What is implied by Rand's comment is that, in principle, the life-enhancing implications of a judgment can never be known unless the judgment is made manifest in overt action. In sum, freedom of choice or judgment implies the freedom to act on one's judgment, and such actions will occur in the material world. All of the foregoing is itself justified in terms of what is necessary for the achievement of a good human life.

Needless to say, freedom of action does not mean the freedom to plunge a knife into someone's stomach, for that would be a violation of the basic right to life. In this connection, Rand holds that a violation of one's property rights is an expression of force against the individual himself.[24] In a very real sense, to steal, to defraud, or to expropriate another's property is to initiate an act of violence against that person. It only follows that if our lives find their expression in the realm of objects—whether those objects be scholarly books or business enterprises—the nonconsensual use of that property constitutes a direct attack on the person himself. Unfortunately, we often tend to see a person's life as extending only to that person's outer epidermic layer. When a new law is passed that forcibly extracts a portion of one's income, we speak of that event as a tax on one's property and not on one's life or personhood. Indeed, we even tend to think of criminal actions, such as theft, as deplorable only because they violate a social rule and not because they represent an assault on someone's life. Rand's argument is that one cannot divorce what one has produced from one's personhood without thereby destroying the proper picture of human existence.[25]

The foregoing argument can be expressed by saying that human beings are ends in themselves and not means to the ends of others.[26] Since life is an end in itself and since life does not exist in the abstract but only in individuals, each individual's life is an end in itself. Rand's doctrine of individual rights is merely the *social* expression of the previous point. In a social context, we show our respect for the concept of each person's being an end in himself by not demanding that he deal with us on any terms but consent.[27] Voluntary agreement is the operative principle of Rand's theory of rights. She calls it the "principle of trade"—exchanging value for value.[28] Granted, there are many complications in determining when one has initiated force, rightfully owns a piece of property, has violated or not lived up to an agreement, and so forth. Rand, however, is more concerned with providing an overall view of the proper social order than with working out its details. The principle of trade and the theory of rights behind that principle constitute the basic structure of that vision. While some may hold that merely arguing for basic principles is not enough to test a doctrine's validity, we believe that the kind of challenge Rand poses for conventional thinking on these issues demands that the overall outline be established before the details can be worked on. Any other procedure would have lost sight of the end to be achieved.

Rand's theory of rights is what informs her defense of capitalism. She defines *capitalism* as follows: "capitalism is a social system based on the recognition of individual rights, including property rights, in which all property is privately owned."[29] Notice that the foundation of Rand's definition is in terms of individual rights and not in terms of the class in control of the means of production or the degree to which government interferes with business enterprise. Capitalism is not simply an economic system. Indeed, for Rand, the essence of capitalism is represented by a moral rather than an economic doctrine. If individual rights are respected in a society, then that society is capitalistic. Rand's conception of capitalism is, in principle, a novel one; for it allows for a society that values primarily art and literature to be just as capitalistic as one that values automobiles and boats—so long as both respect individual rights.[30]

One of the unique features of Rand's defense of capitalism is that she neither considers capitalism a necessary evil (as do many conservatives) nor tries to defend it simply in terms of the benefits it produces (as do many economists). It is not that we must put up with the system to reap its benefits, as we put up with manure to grow a flower garden. Rather, Rand defends the thesis that the very mode of human interaction called for by capitalism is the only morally justifiable way for people to socialize. Consider this passage:

> The *moral* justification of capitalism does not lie in the altruist claim that it represents the best way to achieve "the common good". . . . The moral justification of capitalism lies in the fact that it is the only system consonant with man's rational nature, that it protects man's survival *qua* man, and that its ruling principle is: *justice*.[31]

This is not Adam Smith, F. A. Hayek, or Milton Friedman's defense of capitalism, for these thinkers defend capitalism in terms of its overall social product. Rand, on the other hand, goes to the heart of the issue, because only she has been willing to say that capitalism is an inherently moral social structure.

To make her case for capitalism more plausible, however, Rand does have to overcome some rather widely held misconceptions about the social effects of capitalism. For example, in one chapter of ***Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal***[32] the issues of monopoly, depression, labor unions, public education, inherited wealth, and the practicability of a laissez-faire system are discussed. We cannot undertake an examination of these issues here, and we refer the reader to the aforementioned chapter and the bibliography at the end of that volume.[33] Nevertheless, we can at least indicate Rand's attitude on a few general and more philosophic matters.

It has often been asserted that capitalism is a system that extols the pursuit of self-interest. This statement is usually meant to be a strike against capitalism; but for Rand it is not only descriptively accurate but morally acceptable as well. Some of the issues surrounding the role of self-interest in society have already been discussed in this volume and are further detailed in the following essay by Antony Flew. One does not, however, capture Rand's full view if one's analysis merely shows that capitalism is a social system based on principles that accord with rational self-interest. Rand also seems to hold that capitalism is a system which provides incentives for *advancing* one's self-interest. In the first place, capitalism promotes one of Rand's cardinal virtues—productivity. Whatever one's line of work, a competitive and free market tends to push one toward the achievement of the best one is able to produce within a given context.[34] Because there are no guarantees that past achievements will not be bettered, there are strong incentives to continue to produce at the maximum level. Moreover, those who are innovative and hard-working are not held to the level of the mediocre and the slothful, since there is the full expectation of reaping the rewards of one's efforts. In short, capitalism is a system directed toward achievement.

The push for achievement is given its motive force by the competitive nature of a capitalistic economy. Rand argues that competition is neither the law of the jungle nor a "dog-eat-dog" mode of existence. As Rand put it, "The motto 'dog eat dog' . . . is *not* applicable to capitalism nor to dogs."[35] Competition is not a zero-sum game where someone wins and another loses, such that there is no overall gain between parties. Competition is rather a method of coordinating activities in which those who are most efficient at utilizing a given resource are in a position to do so. A kind of human ecological balance is promoted by the market. An economy of resources develops with the result that the appropriate quantity of goods of optimal quality are directed into those areas where they are most needed or desired. The arguments on the efficiency of the market are not new with Rand, but the emphasis she places upon the market's beneficial effects on one's own sense of worth or efficacy is a novel perspective.

In any case, since the market tends to put resources into the hands of those most adept at using them, all stand to benefit—even those who may have been overcome by a more efficient competitor. As the economists tell us, the benefit of an efficient allocation of resources—through competitive markets—is a higher standard of living for all.[36] Another's success in the market is not achieved at the expense of someone else; for if that were the case, there would be no advance in the standard of living—everyone would simply be changing positions. If we see competition as a directive device,[37] however, we realize that the success of some and the failure of others is a signal about where resources ought to be directed. And since the market order allows the mobility to follow those signals quickly and fully, the efficiency thereby obtained permits sufficient surplus to raise everyone's standard of living.

In this connection it is important to realize that profits (contrary to popular belief) are also not achieved at someone else's expense. In opposition to the Marxist contention that progress in a capitalist order is the result of exploiting the surplus labor of the workers, Rand argues that capitalism is the only system that entirely removes sacrifice from human interaction.[38] Collectivism, in whatever variety, is a system wherein some are sacrificed for the sake of others. The sacrificial character of collectivist social systems stems from their willingness to consider the "needs of society" as overriding the individual's own interests. Rand dramatically states the issue in the following passage:

> The social theory of ethics substitutes "society" for God—and though it claims that its chief concern is life on earth, it is *not* the life of man, not the life of an individual, but the life of a disembodied entity, *the collective*. . . . As far as the individual is concerned, *his* ethical duty is to be the selfless, voiceless, rightless slave of any need, claim or demand asserted by others.[39]

The Marxists are, indeed, correct to speak of surplus (i.e., profit) as the motive force for progress in a capitalist society; but that surplus is an individual phenomenon and *not* a class phenomenon. In a capitalist society, production is a process of individual efforts coordinated by a network of contractual agreements. No one is forced to associate with those one finds detrimental to one's interests.[40] This is not to say that capitalism is a fantasy land where one never confronts difficult choices or finds oneself in disagreeable situations.

Capitalism, however, does hold out the promise that the products of one's efforts will not be expropriated without one's consent and that one will not have to exert oneself for the sake of an end one has not chosen. It is true that what one has to offer others may not be wanted by them, but the freedom to refuse a product is just the flip side of the freedom to offer it. Thus human relationships are nonsacrificial in the sense that they are consummated only when all parties agree to a specific course of action.

If voluntary interaction among men is morally superior to coerced interaction, then there are no grounds for the forcible rectification of the results of voluntary interaction. Individuals who engage in just exchanges—that is, who voluntarily contract for mutually agreed upon purposes—cannot then be forced to engage in involuntary exchange. Nozick has termed the theory of justice that looks only to past actions to see if current holdings were voluntarily gained an historical entitlement theory.[41] The entitlement theory is opposed to a theory that relies on "end-state" principles—that is, principles which demand that society conform to some specific pattern. The upshot of Nozick's argument is that if past actions were voluntarily undertaken by all parties concerned, there are no grounds for a later attempt to rectify the results of those interactions.

The fundamental place accorded to freedom of choice by both Rand and Nozick would imply that choices to engage in trade detrimental to one's objective interest (e.g., the choice to consume cigarettes) is morally superior to coercive attempts to prohibit the detrimental behavior. Thus, all forced redistributive schemes and all attempts to keep people from harming themselves are inherently pernicious. A society that mixes free and coerced exchanges is one which has chosen to mix two incompatible theories of the appropriate form of human interaction. And just as mixed economies are inherently unstable because the pockets of free trade tend to upset the plans imposed by the state,[42] so also does the mixture of voluntary and coerced exchanges tend to unsettle a society's moral values.

Today we find mass confusion about what are appropriate and inappropriate ways for human beings to interact. The result must be either further restriction on liberty or further removal of already existing restrictions. That is the choice we face. And even though we seem to be choosing the former course, the very fact that we do have a choice means we are not doomed to that alternative.

In all of Rand's discussions of the virtues of capitalism one must remember that no system of laissez-faire capitalism has ever existed.[43] Many of the alleged abuses of capitalism—such as depression, poverty, and war—cannot be attributed to capitalism itself, but to the actions of the state.[44] Thus many of the examples used against capitalism are simply beside the point. To justify this last claim is beyond the scope of this essay. We mention it only to alert the reader to the fact that one must distinguish the results that can be directly attributable to the market from those attributable to the state (or a mixture of state and market). Rand holds that when one has carefully examined the evidence, one will find that governmental action is usually responsible for the abuses normally attributed to the market order.

To claim that the state is often guilty of promoting problems that would have been otherwise nonexistent or less severe in a market order requires at least a general outline of Rand's view of the role and nature of the state.[45] We must know, in other words, what Rand takes to be the permissible limits of state power before we can determine whether a given state has gone beyond those limits. Rand restricts the state's function to the retaliatory use of physical force.[46] The basic principle behind the permissibility of the retaliatory use of physical force is the right of self-defense.[47] Individuals have the right of self-defense, because without that right their other rights could not be protected. The state acts in behalf of this right of self-defense, and the reason the state does so rather than individuals themselves seems to be because of the potential for excessive responses to minor rights violations. Moreover, without a set of rules for evidence and for punishment, there would be no way to adjudicate claims concerning rights violations. And without some method of adjudication, people would be able to deal with one another in *whatever* way their desires happened to push them. Under such a system no rights would be protected at all. Rand does not, however, seem to have either an explicit theory of punishment or a detailed theory about the structure of proper rules of evidence.[48]

The essential role of government is to protect people's rights, not only by preventing physical violence, but also by the enforcement of contractual agreements. Rand considers a breach of contract (together with fraud and extortion) to be an indirect initiation of force. In such cases, values are obtained without consent and then, by mere possession, are retained by force and not by right. Yet it is not only because rights must be protected that governments are justified. A further justification for government lies in the fact that without such protection civilization would be impossible, and civilization is necessary for people to achieve their proper end as human beings. This defense of the existence of government follows, given the fact that rights themselves are seen in terms of what is necessary for a proper human life.

Rand adopts the essentially Weberian view that governments possess a monopoly on the legal use of physical force. The monopoly status of government means that

the government possesses great potential to violate rights.[49] The strictures on governmental action are, therefore, the same as the strictures placed upon individuals—actions that initiate force must not be taken. Moreover, since the government possesses a monopoly on the legal use of force, the potential consequences of its violation of rights is more serious than the criminal's violation of rights (even if we collectively aggregate the potential consequences of all criminals at any given time). These potential consequences of governmental abuse require that specific limitations be placed upon government. The regimes of Stalin, Hitler, and Mao are constant reminders that the violation of rights is more often and to a greater degree perpetrated by governments than by criminals.

Now that we have sketched the basic areas of Rand's political theory, we face the question of just where Rand's contribution in this area lies. Apart from the many interesting specifics one might mention, perhaps the most general statement of her contribution is the following. Rand attempts to combine an essentially classical or premodern view of man with a modern political doctrine; that is to say, an Aristotelian view of man's nature is integrated with a liberal political doctrine. The argument, as we have seen, is that freedom of action in society is a function of what is proper to living a good human life—indeed, what is necessary for the fulfillment of our human potential. There have been other intellectuals who have held a basically classical view of man and who were also political liberals. But no one else has shown the connection between those two outlooks as explicitly and successfully as Ayn Rand. Many details still need to be given thought, and there are certainly controversies that must be settled. Nevertheless, Rand offers us the outline of a theory that can motivate much scholarly research and debate. The present volume is the first step in that effort to discuss the merits of the Randian teaching.

Like the ancients, Rand has always strongly adhered to the view that ideas not only have consequences, but also have an important impact on culture. Moreover, Rand never wavers from the belief in the primacy of philosophy. Her emphasis on the role of the intellect culminates in the importance she attaches to the most intellectual of all subject matters—philosophy. Her advice to philosophers, and to other intellectuals as well, is summed up in the following passage:

> The best among the present intellectuals should consider the tremendous power which they are holding, but have never fully exercised or understood. If any man among them feels that he is the helpless, ineffectual stepson of a "materialistic" culture that grants him neither wealth nor recognition. . . . let him realize that ideas are not an escape from reality, not a hobby for "disinterested" neurotics in ivory towers, but the most crucial and productive power in human existence.[50]
>
> ([**"For the New Intellectual"**])

Notes

1. Ayn Rand, "Man's Rights," in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: New American Library, 1967), p. 320. Hereafter *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* will be cited as *CUI.* (The essay "Man's Rights" also appeared in Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness* [New York: New American Library, 1964].)
2. Cf. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Random House, 1957).
3. Rand, "Man's Rights," p. 322.
4. Ayn Rand, "What Is Capitalism," in CUI, p. 19. (This essay also appeared in the *Objective Newsletter,* November-December 1965.)
5. Ibid.
6. Ayn Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," in *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 20.
7. Ibid., p. 21: "Psychologically, the choice 'to think or not' is the choice 'to focus or not.' Existentially, the choice 'to focus or not' is the choice 'to be conscious or not.' Metaphysically, the choice 'to be conscious or not' is the choice of life or death."
8. Cf. the discussion of this in chapter 4 of this volume.
9. Henry Veatch, *Rational Man* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 46.
10. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.3.1094b12-14.
11. Rand, "Objectivist Ethics," pp. 20-21.
12. This is, by the way, the reason for Rand's rejection of religion.
13. Ayn Rand, "This Is John Galt Speaking," in *For the New Intellectual* (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 134.
14. Rand, "Man's Rights," p. 322. On the next page Rand also says, "To violate man's rights means to compel him to act against his own judgment, or to expropriate his value."
15. Tibor Machan, *Human Rights and Human Liberties* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1975), p. 119.
16. Douglas Den Uyl, "Freedom and Virtue," *Reason Papers* 5 (Winter 1979).
17. Rand, "Man's Rights," p. 322.
18. Quoted ibid., p. 324.
19. Frederic Bastiat, "Stupid Greed and False Philanthropy," in *The Law and Clichés of Socialism,* trans. Dean Russell (Whittier, Calif.: Constructive Action, 1964), p. 14.

20. Robert Nozick, "How Liberty Upsets Patterns," in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), pp. 160-64.

21. In this respect it should be emphasized that Rand's political philosophy is thoroughly nonutopian. It is a political theory that considers man as he is now, not as something he is supposed to evolve into come the millennia.

22. Rand, "Man's Rights," p. 322.

23. Ayn Rand, "Collectivized Rights," in VOS. [*The Virtue of Selfishness*], pp. 101-6.

24. Rand, "What Is Capitalism," p. 19.

25. In some respects our foregoing account of an individual's relationship to his property is much like Hegel's view (cf. G. W. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 40. Given this connection to Hegel, we are led to speculate that Rand, like Marx, would develop a theory of alienation. Alienation for Rand would have to be something like the coercive separation of one from one's property by the state (e.g., by taxation)!

26. Rand, "What Is Capitalism," p. 19.

27. Rand, "Man's Rights," pp. 321-23.

28. Rand, "What Is Capitalism," p. 19.

29. Ibid.

30. Of course, the likelihood of the former society being achieved is another question.

31. Rand, "What Is Capitalism," p. 20.

32. Rand, *CUI,* ch. 5, pp. 72-95. Cf. also ch. 4 on antitrust.

33. Cf. Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1949); not mentioned in Rand's bibliography but nevertheless very important is Murray Rothbard, *Man, Economy, and State* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1970).

34. Rand, "What Is Capitalism," pp. 25-28.

35. Rand, "Objectivist Ethics," p. 34.

36. Rothbard, *Man, Economy, and State,* pp. 879-81.

37. The work on competition as a coordination process was begun by F. A. Hayek. Cf. his *Individualism and the Economic Order* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1972), pp. 77-91; see also Gerald P. O'Driscoll, Jr., *Economics as a Coordination Problem* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed, Andrews & McMeel, 1977).

38. Rand, "What Is Capitalism," p. 28.

39. Rand, "Objectivist Ethics," p. 34.

40. Rand would argue that to say nature "forces" a person to work in order to eat is to misapply the concept. It confuses human action taken to alter nature with the conditions given by nature. As Murray Rothbard has stated (*Man, Economy, and State,* p. 581): "The false confusion of freedom with abundance rests on a failure to distinguish between the conditions given by nature and man-made actions to transform nature. . . . Man's condition on earth is that he must work with the given natural conditions and improve them by human action. It is a reflection on nature, not the free market, that everyone is 'free to starve.'"

41. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia,* p. 150.

42. Cf. Ludwig von Mises, *Planning for Freedom* (South Holland, Ill.: Libertarian Press, 1962).

43. Cf. Ayn Rand, "America's Persecuted Minority: Big Business," in *CUI,* p. 48.

44. Cf. Murray Rothbard, "The Economics of Violent Intervention in the Market," in *Man, Economy, and State,* p. 765-890.

45. We shall ignore the question of anarcho-capitalism here. This is to say, we shall ignore the possibility of whether a system of competing protection agencies is possible. For Rand's view on this issue, see Ayn Rand, "The Nature of Government," in *CUI,* pp. 334-35. (This essay also appeared in *VOS.*)

46. The following remarks on Rand's view of government are based primarily on her essay "The Nature of Government," ibid., pp. 329-37.

47. Cf. Rand, "Objectivist Ethics," p. 33.

48. It seems likely to us that Rand would not argue that the law could be deduced a priori from the natural right to liberty or could arise from the market mechanism alone. Rules of evidence, standards for judgmental processes in the determination of guilt or innocence, and the mode of retaliatory force would all require experts and the instrumentality for their functioning (the state). Cf. Rand, "The Nature of Government," p. 334.

49. Despite the dismal history of the state, it should be noted that Rand does not consider the nature of government as requiring coercion. Cf. Ayn Rand, "Government Financing in a Free Society," in *VOS,* pp. 116-20. A lottery is suggested by Rand as one of the ways government might be financed; yet this suggestion is rebutted by Robert Nozick (*Anarchy, State, and Utopia,* p. 25).

50. Ayn Rand, "For the New Intellectual," in *For the New Intellectual,* p. 52.

James T. Baker (essay date 1987)

SOURCE: Baker, James T. "The Themes and Theories of Ayn Rand." In *Ayn Rand,* pp. 94-123. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987.

[*In the following essay, Baker details the central themes and theories of Rand's philosophy of Objectivism, including her concepts of rationalism, self-interest, capitalism, feminism, religion, and other Objectivist concerns.*]

From the time ***Atlas Shrugged*** appeared in 1957 until the day she died in 1982, Ayn Rand returned again and again, in articles and public addresses, to the radio speech of that novel's mechanical genius John Galt. She considered it the essential statement of her public philosophy; and she quoted it as though Galt were a living authority and his words holy writ. She said that in its 35,000 word text, which required two full years to write and condense, lay all the themes and theories of Objectivism. All her later books were merely exegesis.

Galt's message to the American people was a call for each man to earn his own keep, take responsibility for his own but for no one else's life, and be a rationalist, an individualist, a producer. He warned that man's most dangerous enemy, as he works to establish his way in this world, as he becomes self-sufficient, is the temptation to irrational thought, collectivist morality, altruistic ethics, and mystical metaphysics (***AS*** [***Atlas Shrugged***], 1009-69). In essence, as Rand had said in ***We the Living,*** "Man is a word that has no plural" (***W*** [***We the Living***], 229). John Galt delineated the implications of that principle; and in doing so he said all Rand wanted said.

Objectivism

As her fame grew, as she moved from novelist to philosopher, however, Rand realized that she must develop in greater detail, explain more explicitly, fill in the gaps of John Galt's message. This required another twenty years and another six books to complete, and it established Ayn Rand as a public philosopher.

She called her philosophy Objectivism. The term comes from what she considered the central theme of her thought: that universal concepts or ideas, the ancient problem for philosophers, have an objective reality. She told Alvin Toffler in the *Playboy* interview that "objective reality exists independently of any perceiver or of the perceiver's emotions, feelings, wishes, hopes or fears."[1] And in her definitive statement on the foundations of Objectivism, ***Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology,*** she explained that her school and hers alone in modern times considered universal concepts to be neither received by mystical revelation nor invented by the mind of man.

Yet she also believed, and made the second theme of her philosophy, that man's mind is capable of perceiving and interpreting these universal concepts. She said that she and she alone followed in direct line from Aristotle, the father of reason, through Aquinas, the father of early modern rationalism, to the twentieth century. She took great pride in being the only true rationalist of her times; and she argued that man is perfectly capable of integrating "the facts of reality" and creating a rational philosophy of life according to a "cognitive method of classification whose process must be performed by man, but whose content is dictated by reality" (***I*** [***Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology***], 71).

It requires a careful reading of Rand's novels and essays, followed by studied organization of their detail, to identify and clarify the implications she drew from this basic assumption about reality; but when this is done, Objectivism stands as a distinct and logically coherent if still controversial philosophy. For Rand the external world exists independently of man and man's consciousness; yet man, gifted with superior reason, is capable of understanding, interpreting, and using this reality. Man perceives objective reality through his senses, and his reason integrates it for productive utility. Reason is his only means of true knowledge and his only means of survival in this world. It must therefore be cultivated, protected, and used to the fullest extent of its capacity.

Rand believed that man's rational interpretation of reality would invariably lead him to an ethic of rational self-interest. She said that "man exists for his own sake," that "the pursuit of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose," and that he should not "sacrifice himself to others, nor sacrifice others to himself."[2] The rational man does not borrow the values of others, nor does he impose his values on anyone else, particularly by physical force. He knows that the politicoeconomic system that offers him the best chance to realize his potential is laissez-faire capitalism.

William O'Neill, who has studied Rand's philosophy in a more systematic way than perhaps any other scholar, has summed up the basic principles of Objectivism under the following categories: Rand's metaphysics is objective reality; her epistemology is reason; her ethics is self-interest; and her politics is radical capitalism.[3] This chapter will investigate in some detail these and other themes and theories of Objectivism. My aim is to identify and interpret and evaluate them as "objectively" as possible.

Rationalism

Ayn Rand made clear in her ***Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*** that she considered herself an Aristotelian, or a "moderate realist." She rejected the "extreme

realism" of Plato, who she said believed in a reality separate from concrete matter and thus accessible to man only through mysticism. She also rejected the post-classical schools of nominalism and conceptualism, both of which she said denied the objective reality of concepts (***I,*** 2). For Rand concepts are objectively real and are bonded to the concrete world. They are readily accessible to man through his reason. Complementary to her emphasis on the objective nature of reality, then, is her emphasis on the rational nature of man. No image of man that neglects or denies his rational nature is acceptable to Objectivism.

Rand once said that on her tombstone she wanted one word, the word that best described her philosophy, her sense of life. It was not "Novelist" or "Objectivist" or even "Individualist" but "Rationalist."[4] The heroes of her novels and the object of her praise in philosophic essays are first and foremost men of reason. They do not depend for their knowledge, ethics, or morality upon social norms or mystical revelations. They are coldly rational, self-sufficient, and unapologetic for being what they are. Her most succinct statement of this rationalism appeared in the September 1971 edition of the *Objectivist* when she explained: "I am not *primarily* an advocate of capitalism, but of egoism; and I am not primarily an advocate of egoism, but of reason" (***P*** [***Philosophy***], vii). For Rand reason stands as the foundation of all human achievement. It fosters egoistic individualism, which fosters productivity, which creates and sustains capitalism, which blesses all men. The man of reason reaches to the stars, while the man without reason descends to the mud and chokes on his own irrationality.

As we have seen, Rand credited Aristotle with establishing the value of rationalism; and she said that only in times when Aristotle is the guiding light is man self-confident and productive. When he is not, man is mired in fear and stagnation. One of her most intriguing metaphors for rationality and irrationality is found in her essay "Apollo and Dionysius." There she compares the Apollo 11 moon shot to the Woodstock rock festival, both coming in the sultry summer of 1969. That man is capable, simultaneously, of such noble scientific achievement and of wallowing in field mud to the beat of jungle drums demonstrated to her man's vital choice in life. He may choose to follow his rational nature and climb to the stars through technology, or he may choose to follow his irrational urgings and sink to the earth in a drunken, mystical stupor. The choice is Apollo, god of light, or Dionysius, god of wine (***N*** [***The New Left***], 57—81).

In all of Rand's writings, both fiction and philosophy, the theme of rationalism is closely linked with that of individualism. The man of reason is always an individualist, shunning society's values, following only the urgings of his own mind. Her heroes are strong rather than merciful, resolute rather then considerate. Their most outstanding, decisive, unalterable characteristic is supreme egoism.

In the novella ***Anthem,*** the myth of one man's escape from collectivist totalitarianism, she said that Ego is the one word that such a regime must strike from man's vocabulary in order to enslave him. The hero of ***The Fountainhead,*** Howard Roark, destroys his own building rather than see it modified by lesser minds; and in court he defends his actions with an appeal to individualism. John Galt, Francisco D'Anconia, and Ragnor Danneskjold in ***Atlas Shrugged*** are willing to bring the world's shaky economy to the ground to satisfy their own egos. Throughout her career Rand praised such individualists, men who go their own way, taking pleasure in lives independent of the herd.

Self-Interest

The rational individual, the man of ego, is by nature a selfish being, a man of supreme self-confidence and self-interest. Ayn Rand called such a man a hero, a person to be respected and praised for his human spirit. It grieved her that selfishness had a negative connotation, and she blamed this on the advocates of what she considered destructive altruism. When broadcaster Mike Wallace asked her if hers were a philosophy of selfishness, she answered vigorously: "Selfish? Most certainly. Every man has a right to exist for himself—and not to sacrifice himself for others."[5]

This was the interview in which she declared that she was not only anti-Christian but altogether antimystical, by which she meant that she opposed all religion. She explained that the central symbol of Christianity, the cross, represents and advocates the sacrifice of a good man to bad man and that rational self-interest forbids this kind of tragedy. The individualist may find it hard at times to swim against the current of collectivism, but he can always find a few like-minded friends who will help him, and in time his selfishness will be vindicated. Selfishness will not go unrewarded.

It is indeed more than a virtue. It is the foundation for a code of ethics that Rand called "the morality of rational self-interest" (***C*** [***Capitalism***], 150). The selfish person, she said, is concerned only with his own productive labor, which he does proudly and efficiently, and he does not interfere with the work of others, either to assist or to hinder. This is why men of reason, men of self-interest, will not have conflicts of interest (***V*** [***The Virtue of Selfishness***], 50-56). Men who value their own lives above all other things are society's producers, the "prime movers of mankind," while men who do not value their lives, altruists, are "metaphysical killers" waiting for a chance to be physical ones (***W,*** vi). Hitler

and Stalin were for Rand men of low self-esteem who had to compensate by trying to rule other men with iron fists. Capitalists like Cornelius Vanderbilt and James J. Hill, however, were men of rational self-interest and high self-esteem who had no need to rule their fellow-men.

Rand believed that the individualist must above all other things avoid the modern "cult" of altruism. Altruism, as she defined it, means self-sacrifice, self-immolation, self-abnegation, self-denial, and ultimately self-destruction. It is the vampire that sucks the blood from producers. She believed that medieval Christian altruism, which was set aside by the rediscovery of Aristotelian ethics at the beginning of the Renaissance, was revived by the philosopher Immanuel Kant. Kant was a far worse enemy of individualism, of rational self-interest, than Christianity had been because while Christianity advocated love of neighbor without calling for hatred of self, Kant called for both. Kant taught that an action is moral only if performed out of sense of duty with no benefit to the person performing the act. This sense of duty, this altruism, was Rand's main target as she tried to teach the virtue of selfishness (***P,*** 60-70).

For her altruism was a primitive phenomenon, a reversion to a tribal ethic. In prehistoric times, she said, it was necessary to band together into tribes, to think of the needs of others, in order for humans to survive as a race. In modern times it is but a "psycho-epistemological" defense against the opportunities of individualism, a protection of lesser men against the growth of individualists.[6] Altruism is used by the modern "mystic-altruistic-collectivist axis" of "second-handers" who cannot thrive in an open society to keep the "man of ability" in his place. This axis has created the present "Age of Envy," in which the good are hated for being good, the strong for being strong, and the producer for being productive (***P,*** 102).

All of which explains why Rand chose to call the ***Atlas Shrugged*** valley in which her men of rational self-interest waited for the collectivist economy to collapse a "Utopia of Greed." There each man traded his skill for payment in pure gold and in turn paid pure gold for the skill of other men. There no one thought more of another than he did of himself. There each man thought and acted for himself and for no one else. Men of undiluted selfishness lived in harmony with each other, without conflict of interest, because all of them followed the dictates of reason. The symbol of their society was the dollar sign. This was utopia for Ayn Rand. She would continue to delineate its principles throughout her life.

The Hero

For Ayn Rand the man of rational self-interest, the man who refused to live for the sake of another man, was a hero. She never seemed to notice or care that critics ridiculed her novels for their outsized characters, too large, too perfect for this world. She glorified in portraying man not as he is but as she supposed he should be. At the end of ***Atlas Shrugged,*** after her heroes have decided to return and save the world they have brought to its knees, she wrote: "My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute." And in her introduction to the 1968 edition of ***Night of January 16th*** she wrote: "The motive of my writing has always been the presentation of an ideal man."[7]

The first hero Rand encountered as a young woman was the fictional British officer serving the crown in India, the blond soldier Cyrus. In her own writings the early heroic figures were all women—Kira Argounova of ***We the Living,*** Karen Andre of ***Night of January 16th***—and it was not until ***Anthem*** that she created her first really ideal man. He was Equality 7-2521, later called the Unconquered and later still Prometheus. He was the one who learned to say, despite a totalitarian regime's mind control, "I am a man. This miracle of me is mine to own and keep, and mine to guard, and mine to use, and mine to kneel before!" (***A*** [***Anthem***], 110). His spirit was in Howard Roark of ***The Fountainhead*** and in Hank Rearden, Francisco d'Anconia, Ragnor Danneskjold, and John Galt of ***Atlas Shrugged.***

The hero is probably Rand's central theme—and theory. She was undaunted by the fact that he does not exist in flesh and blood, that the few times she thought she had found him she was sorely disappointed. She acted as if she believed that by capturing him in fiction she had proved him a universal concept and that since all concepts are potentially concrete he can exist in this world. At the end of ***Atlas Shrugged*** she wrote: "I trust that no one will tell me that men such as I wrote about don't exist. That this book has been written—and published—is my proof that they do." This is Rand's ontological argument for the existence of heroes. With Anselm of Canterbury, who believed he proved the existence of God this way, she said that since she could conceive of men greater than ordinary men, they must exist. One can recognize them because they have faces that bear no trace of "pain or fear or guilt."

Her hero was the Active Man who needs his independence in order to be creative and productive, his twin passions in life. In the *Playboy* interview she told Toffler that the Active Man's paramount goal in life, to be productive, comes before his friends, his family, even his own well-being. "A man who places others first," she once said, "above his own creative work, is an emotional parasite."[8] The Active Man, the prime mover of society, is at home only on the job, is effective only in a free market, and trusts his own reason over the altruistic plots of collectivists.

It is interesting, given the impact of the figure "Cyrus" on the young Ayn Rand, that none of her heroes is a soldier. Nor does any go to the ends of the earth to do battle with the forces of evil, with the possible exception of the industrialist-intellectual-pirate Ragnor Danneskjold, who uses his naval fire power to sink the ships of altruistic nations sending charity to needy ones. Yet even her Ragnor seems to be waiting for his opportunity to open an automobile factory somewhere in Nebraska. In point of fact, Rand's heroes are all builders of one sort or another, erecting their office buildings, establishing factories, founding banks. They are all in business of one type or another.

Rand once said that her favorite novel among those she did not herself write was *Calumet "K."* In that story, written early in this century, the young hero Bannon struggles against great odds and opposition to build, of all things, a giant grain elevator in the Midwest. Rand admired his "self-confident resourcefulness, his inexhaustible energy, his dedication" to his own personal vision. Her own Howard Roark would build not the public monuments socialism erects with forced labor to the memory of altruists but private buildings dedicated to and paid for by capitalists. Roark's erections are therefore larger, more practical, and more durable than those of collectivists. They are also among Rand's most durable creations.

Her heroes all suffer at the hands of jealous enemies. Roark and Rearden are both thwarted again and again by the machinations of lesser men. Roark loses and is forced to resign a number of commissions because he will not compromise his convictions and conform to popular conventions. Rearden loses trade and ultimately his factory because he insists on following the dictates of his own will. Both men are brought to trial for being individualists, men of rational self-interest. Yet Rand writes stories as they should be, not necessarily as they are in real life, and both of her heroes go free. Roark persuades a jury that he did the right thing when he blew up a housing complex, while Rearden's clear-eyed refusal to answer absurd questions cows his accusers into helpless surrender. Other heroes—D'Anconia, Danneskjold, Galt—also suffer but also win in the final scenes. It would seem then that Leonard Peikoff is right when he argues that at heart Rand was a romantic optimist. After the dark days of the late 1930s, her dark chapters, those in which her heroes suffer, are brief and transitory. Vindication and victory are inevitable and sweet. A benevolent universe favors her type of man. Her good guys always win.

The Villain

If Rand's heroes wear white, her villains are always dressed in black. Her villains, particularly in ***The Fountainhead*** and ***Atlas Shrugged,*** after she shed the more complicated characters of earlier works, are as dastardly as her heroes are good and true. Yet hers are a unique kind of villain: men who are evil because they are weak, because they lack moral fortitude, and this because they lack an epistemology capable of creating an ethic of individuality. Without an epistemology, a sense of life's potential, they are without hope.

They compose an interesting gallery, as interesting in fact as that of the Rand heroes. There is, in the early novel ***We the Living,*** Kira's cousin Victor, who becomes a Party member because the Party is the way up the socioeconomic ladder, who denies his heritage, his family, his own true self in order to reach the top of the dung heap, who sells himself and loses himself for privilege. There is in ***The Fountainhead*** poor Peter Keating, a man without rational direction, a man who cannot trust his own judgment or his own talent, a true "second-hander" who eventually ends up on the slag heap of architects and human beings. There is Gail Wynand, also of ***The Fountainhead,*** Rand's only moderately sympathetic—and tragic—villain, who had the makings of a hero, a self-made man who earned a fortune by giving people what they want, but who is eventually destroyed by the same people; in the end he can only provide the money for the real hero, Howard Roark, to erect a building for him.

There is Wesley Mouch of ***Atlas Shrugged,*** the socialist prime minister of collectivism, the man who longs for cooperation to the point of extinction, who will lead his country down the altruistic road to oblivion. There is James Taggart, also of ***Atlas Shrugged,*** heir to a rail empire, a man of weak personal identity, who makes bargains with other rail owners to avoid competition, who seeks and lives off government protection and subsidies, who will suck away profits for personal pleasure until the essence of his empire is gone and the shell collapses. And there is Rand's archvillain, the devious, malicious Ellsworth Toohey of ***The Fountainhead,*** a Rand "looter," a man who wants power not over himself, his work, his destiny, not even over nature or wealth, but over other men.

The key characteristic of Rand's villains is their "secondhandedness." The term *second-hander* was first used by Howard Roark in ***The Fountainhead*** to explain to his friend Gail Wynand, on Wynand's yacht as the two men sailed the high seas, the type of man who hates because he is the exact opposite of the individualist. Second-handers have no personal identity. They try to live other people's lives and let other people live theirs. They seek to be part of a clan, a tribe, a herd, a collective unit of society; and they live only for what they call the common good. Consequently, they make no decision independently of the will of the ignorant majority and are thus no different from other men. Later in the novel, as he defends himself in court for blowing up the

housing project he designed, Roark identifies the second-hander this way: "The basic need of the second-hander is to secure his ties with other men in order to be fed. He places relations first. He declares that man exists in order to serve others" (***AS***, 738).

Rand's villain, her second-hander, is Passive Man. He is in essence a parasite who lives off the work of Active Man. So long as society cares for him, he is willing to submit to the tribe and obey the common will. He seeks privileges and encourages others to seek them as well.[9] He lives off the work of others as does any thief or "looter." Yet despite the damage he can do, in the final analysis he is powerless against Active Man. He will always be with us, as cancerous as Ellsworth Toohey, as disgusting as Peter Keating, as tragic as Gail Wynand, but he can never win out over the individualist. Rand paints him in stark colors, and she permits him to exercise temporary malevolent power, but in the end she always has him paint himself into a corner from which he cannot escape. Rand's heroes will prevail—her villains will fail.

Either/Or

Very few of Ayn Rand's characters fall into the gray category between hero and villain. Only in her early fiction did she experiment with complexity. In her best-selling later work all the characters are black or white. Good and bad for her did not relate to conventional moral standards but depended upon a character's sense of life; and her good characters were those who followed rational self-interest, while the bad ones followed the herd.

This penchant for painting in stark colors, for making such dramatic contrasts between good and evil, for creating faultless heroes and irredeemable villains, evoked critical ridicule. Patricia Donegan of *Commonweal,* commenting on ***Atlas Shrugged,*** chuckled that all her heroes were handsome, clear-eyed, and keenly intellectual, while all her villains had flabby jowls, blood-shot eyes, and muddled brains.[10] As did other critics, she described Rand's characters as mere mannequins used to model Objectivist dogmas.

What critics generally saw as a major literary flaw, her inability or unwillingness to create characters with the mixture of motives to make them human, Rand herself considered her greatest strength. Ethical choices, she said, are always clear-cut, and the people who make them become just as black and white. In the *Playboy* interview she said: "I most emphatically advocate a black-and-white view of the world." "Before you can identify anything as gray, as middle of the road, you have to know what is black and what is white, because gray is a mixture of the two. And when you have established that one alternative is good and the other is evil, there is no justification for the choice of the mixture."[11] She never wavered from this faith. She once said that while her knowledge of facts had increased and her outlook had broadened over the years, her basic assumptions concerning human personality and moral judgments never had.

She spoke out regularly and with force against what she called the "cult of moral grayness," against the tendency to say issues are clouded by complexity, that no position is all right or all wrong. In the June 1964 edition of the ***Objectivist Newsletter*** she admitted that a person should listen to both sides of an issue before making a judgment about it; but she denied that both sides can have equal claim to the truth. She had always found it rather easy, relying on her reason, using Aristotelian concepts, to separate right from wrong, good from evil, because she knew how to apply universal concepts to specific situations. She said that gray is a compromise with black, indeed in most cases a prelude to black, and only the irrational person or the coward, both second-handers, cannot make a definite choice between good and evil. Did she believe that all issues, like her fictional characters, are either all black or all white? "You're damn right I do," she piped (***V,*** 75-79).

She argued that any compromise with false ideology, any admission of its claim to truth, is like a property owner's compromise with a burglar, freedom's compromise with slavery, life's compromise with death. Compromise is doing what one knows is wrong. There was in her scheme of things no way to do the wrong thing for the right reason or vice versa. "Working for an employer who does not share one's ideas is *not* a compromise," she wrote, "but pretending to share his ideas, *is.*" For Ayn Rand, "There can be no compromise on moral principles" (***V,*** 68-70). One can hear a door slamming shut.

Her followers were subject to periodic evaluations of their orthodoxy, and those who had compromised themselves were disciplined or purged. Deviation was compromise with falsehood. One of her former disciples, Jerome Tuccille, tells of purges at the Branden Institute in the mid-1960s that are reminiscent of if not as deadly as the Russian Communist party purges in the mid-1930s.[12] Branden was himself purged in 1968 for what Rand considered ideological and moral compromises, for thinking and living in the gray zone. Branden himself remembers how over the years she grew ever more suspicious of deviation and developed an obsession about loyalty,[13] the logical result of a black-and-white morality.

Capitalism

The whitest of all Rand's whites, the truest of all her truths, the principle least to be compromised, was capitalism. Capitalism was the creation and in turn the cre-

ator of heroic individualism. It was, when unspattered by the black ink of governmental controls, the perfect economic and social system, the only one under which an individualist can and will thrive. Rand's watchword was the French merchants' request to Louis XIV's finance minister Colbert, "*Laissez-nous faire*"—the resounding "Leave us alone." She insisted on a separation of economy and the state patterned on the lines of separation of church and state. She insisted, when asked her philosophy of economics, that she was "a radical for capitalism."[14]

For Rand capitalism is the only economic system "geared to the life of a rational being." It is not only history's most practical system but the most moral as well (***C,*** vii-viii). Only under the capitalism of the late nineteenth century did men of rational self-interest flourish and produce as men are capable of doing. Only then was true freedom for all achieved. Capitalism wiped away European feudal serfdom in the fifteenth century and American slavery in the nineteenth. For her the industrial American North before 1900 was the most progressive, equitable society of all time, a golden age of economic and political liberty, a Camelot. She loved to contrast it to the feudal South of the same period, where ignorance, poverty, and racism still dominated. Capitalism was the difference (***V,*** 129-30).

She was particularly incensed by the shibboleth that the love of money is the root of all evil. She had Francisco d'Anconia of ***Atlas Shrugged*** insist that "money is the barometer of a society's virtue"; he warns: "Run for your life from any man who tells you that money is evil. That sentence is the leper's bell of an approaching looter"; and concludes: "The man who damns money has obtained it dishonorably; the man who respects it has earned it" (***FN*** [***For the New Intellectual***], 108). It is not the love but the hatred of money that is the root of evil. Hank Rearden, at his trial, says: "I refuse to apologize for my ability—I refuse to apologize for my success—I refuse to apologize for my money" (***AS,*** 480). Since money results from success and success from ability, money is the visible symbol of talent. It is a source of pride, not shame, and it is a positive virtue. The paradise of ***Atlas Shrugged,*** the place where men of rational self-interest prepared to save the world, is called a Utopia of Greed, and its symbol is a gold dollar sign.

Rand had her own version of the history of Western civilization. In it Aristotle and his descendants, men who chose reason over mysticism, freedom's insecurity and opportunity over religious and political controls, led the way toward capitalism and progress. Plato and his descendants, "Attilas" who wanted to control man by force and "Witch Doctors" who wanted to do so by mysticism, held man back from these goals. The Middle Ages were a time of Platonic mysticism, the Renaissance and industrial revolution times of Aristotelian rationalism, when intellectuals and businessmen combined to create a climate for progress. So long as these blood brothers, the thinker and the doer, both sons of reason, were allied, all went well. They helped create what Rand considered the most nearly perfect society in history, the American North in the late nineteenth century.

Sadly, however, while the businessman continued to expand the scope of freedom and prosperity, the intellectual defaulted. Following Immanuel Kant, intellectuals returned to the discredited mysticism of the Middle Ages, questioned the reliability of reason, called the businessman a robber baron, called into question the motives and achievements of capitalism, and left the businessman without the philosophic base he needed to operate successfully. Kant led to Marx and retrogressive socialism, with its altruistic morality and governmental controls. Businessman were stripped of their freedom to operate. They reacted to the intellectuals' neo-Witch Doctor mentality by turning to a neo-Attilan one. The golden age came to a tragic halt, its light scattered about a landscape ravaged by collectivism, with only remnants of its glory to remind men of a better day (***FN,*** 3-67).

Time and again Rand attacked the notion that capitalism dehumanizes workers. Under the great capitalists, men of rational self-interest, workers made more gains than at any other time in history. It was not businessmen but second-handers, looters, who were responsible for the excesses, abuses, and ultimately the decline of capitalism. Capitalism gave the modern world its only period of world peace, from 1815 to 1914, and it helped dissipate the tribal racism that eventually led to the two world wars of the twentieth century. It was not the capitalists but the looters, enemies of capitalism, who stirred up envious men, second-handers, particularly those in the government, to bring the capitalists down to the average level. Government controls, concessions, subsidies all led to a "mixed" economy that rendered the capitalists ineffective. They were taxed, restricted, and publicly shamed until they either gave up and joined the cooperating tribe of second-handers or were crushed by the combined power of Attila and the Witch Doctor. Cornelius Vanderbilt and James J. Hill were Rand's shining examples of capitalist virtue. She was willing to forgive the way they bribed legislators to remove restrictive "artificial" barriers to free trade because the barriers were evil (***C,*** 102-8). Such men carried the gold dollar mark high. They were, in her words, America's persecuted minority.

The good guys of history were the capitalists, the bad guys those jealous second-handers and looters who brought them under control "for the common good." "Businessmen," Rand once mused, "are the symbol of a

free society—the symbol of America" (***C,*** 62). They do not exist under dictatorships, either right-wing or left-wing, and they do their most virtuous work in a society that gives them free rein. They are often the scapegoats for the failed policies of lesser men who mix capitalism with socialism and need someone to blame when inevitably their schemes go sour. But Rand argued that capitalists should never be ashamed of doing what they do so well. Money is health, and capitalists bring it to a nation. Without capitalists a new dark age waits to descend.

This is of course the reason Rand believed it so important that America protect the right of private property. While capitalism in this country remains polluted by the socialist policies of recent administrations, America is still the most nearly capitalist nation on earth; and Rand believed that its future depends upon preserving as much of its former capitalist spirit and practice as possible. Private property, she said, is the key to survival. Next to guaranteeing the right to life, the most important function of a government—the second of only two a government can legitimately assume—is to guarantee the right to private property. Man's life is worth living only if he can be productive, and productivity requires private property (***V,*** 94).

Rand saw how difficult the road to a new capitalist era would be for a nation that has strayed from the straight and narrow to dabble in collectivist experimentation. She called the 1960s and 1970s an "age of envy," a time when the individualist was despised for being better than the common man, when the great man was penalized simply for being great.[15] It was a time, she said, when men were hated not for their vices but for their virtues. The much-vaunted "egalitarianism" of the day was actually just a "fig leaf" to cover the jealousy of looters, a device to make all men the same, which meant to make them all equally inferior. The liberation that she heard being preached from every rooftop was to her mind liberation from reality. The equality of income being advocated would result in less equality than ever because competition and productivity and therefore access to goods would inevitably decline (***N,*** 153-82).

As we have seen, Rand believed that the antitechnological mentality of that period was part of an anticapitalist plot to make America a second-rate economy. For her "a *restricted* technology is a contradiction in terms," and when technology declines so does a nation. She saw the ecology movement, the preoccupation with protecting the environment from technology, as the misguided efforts of ignorant youths convinced they were defending nature but in reality serving the interests of envious second-handers and looters who would destroy the free-enterprise system. This assumption led her to make such "Dr. Strangelove" statements as: "Americans over 30 years of age today, give a silent 'Thank you' to the nearest, grimiest, sootiest smoke stacks you can find." The ecology movement, she was sure, was out to destroy the last remnants of capitalism and set up a global dictatorship run by Attilas and Witch Doctors. Its leaders wanted to destroy the very system that had freed them from slavery, and they were doing it by denouncing capitalism for doing what it was meant to do and did so well—create abundance (***N,*** 127-50).

Rand believed that America was nearing the end of its philosophic resources and rapidly approaching moral bankruptcy. Its intellectuals had taught it that man's mind is impotent, reason unreliable, reality unknowable, all of which leads to retrogressive mysticism. She saw no mainstream of philosophic, economic, or political thought, only a dismal swamp. She saw America despised, both by foreign nations and by its own citizens, not because of its flaws, its weaknesses, its failures, but because of its virtues, its achievements, its successes. Yet these very virtues, achievements, and successes proved to her that beneath its mystical, collectivist facade America still retained elements of the capitalism that for one brief shining moment had almost made it as great as it could have been.

These elements, she argued, must be preserved and cultivated. The political leaders she saw around her would never be able to do so, however, and she openly ridiculed them all. She despised all Democrats, the more democratic they were the more she hated them, and with the exception of Barry Goldwater and to a lesser degree Gerald Ford she despised most Republican "me-too-ers" as well, what with their support of a mixed economy and their tendency to mix capitalism with religion. She believed that the future hope of capitalism lay with Objectivists, radicals for capitalism, the new intellectuals who would link arms once again with businessmen and provide capitalism with the philosophic and moral base on which to build and work effectively. Hope might be rather distant, but it was in her vision. It depended not on politicians but on philosophers.

Collectivism

If capitalism was Rand's whitest virtue, collectivism was most surely her blackest vice; and she saw it growing by leaps and bounds both here and abroad. "Politically, the goal of today's dominant trend is statism," she wrote in 1972, using statism as a synonym for collectivism. "Philosophically, the goal is the obliteration of reason; psychologically, it is the erosion of ambition."[16] Collectivism, irrationality, lethargy—these three were always bosom buddies. She had her spokesman for the totalitarian state in ***Anthem*** explain that in his collectivist system "What is not done collectively cannot be good" (***A,*** 81). And in ***Atlas Shrugged*** she captured the essence of collectivist philosophy in the slogan of the bankrupt Twentieth Century Motor Company:

"From Each According To His Ability—To Each According To His Need" (*AS,* 668). This was the company that was forced to close its gates when its mechanical genius John Galt walked away from its altruistic, collectivist statism to form his Utopia of Greed.

By Rand's explicit definition, statist socialist collectivism is the philosophy that makes man both a ward and a servant of society. He exists not for himself but for others (*FN,* 48). It imposes without the consent of the governed the humanitarian projects that should be carried out voluntarily, if at all. It makes, in Rand's memorable phrase, my brother's misfortune my mortgage (*V,* 80-81). It encourages tribal dependency and discourages independent action. Above all, as she made clear in *Anthem,* it forbids men to use "I" and demands the use and even the worship of "We" (*A,* 114).

For these reasons, Rand says, collectivism is not merely impractical and ineffective; it is patently evil. It is the root of war, racism, and slavery. When individualism is denied men, when they are forced into tribal uniformity, the result is armed conflict between tribes, paranoid obsession with preserving our territory from the encroachment of the enemy, and ultimately the attempt to control not just the actions but the thoughts of other tribes. "Men who are free to produce," Rand wrote, "have no incentive to loot" (*C,* 38). The same is true of nations. Horrors and atrocities no man would consider committing for his own sake are readily perpetrated by those who claim to act for "the common good."[17]

Rand never missed a fictional opportunity to blast collectivism. *We the Living* describes the collectivist Soviet state during the early years of the Bolshevik regime as Russians lose their political, economic, and personal freedom. *Anthem* describes a collectivist state of the future in which men have been stripped even of personal identity, all for the sake of "We." *The Fountainhead* describes one man's fight against the collectivist tastes and values of a society afraid to think for itself. *Atlas Shrugged* describes the America that might yet be produced by collectivist economic planners and offers the only alternative Rand saw for men of rational self-interest: to go out on strike. Politically, she said in a *Letter* [*The Ayn Rand Letter*] article, collectivism breeds a swarm of "little Caesars" who strive for power over their fellowmen, while culturally it breeds a "lower species" of "little Neros" who sing depraved odes to altruism while productivity goes up in smoke.[18]

In an intriguing "open letter" to Soviet chess champion Boris Spassky, Rand mused about the way *his* country, a collectivist state, acts in the "sport" of politics. How would he like it if in chess some arbitrary authority continually changed rules? How would he like being required to play with a partner, as a team, without being able to disagree with his partner's decisions? How would he like to play under two sets of rules, one for the proletariat and the other for the bourgeoisie? How would he like having a sudden judicial decree make pawns more valuable than kings? How would he like being told to sacrifice strong pieces for weak ones? How would he like prizes given to losers, while winners are put to shame for being good?[19] All this was to her Soviet collectivism, the purest form of collectivism, the prototype, the exact opposite to capitalist individualism.

Libertarianism

The question of how to classify Rand politically is crucial for understanding her thoughts; yet it is one of the most difficult of questions about her to answer. She voted, when on rare occasion she found a candidate worth voting for, Republican; but Republicans radical enough for her were few and far between. She never found a good word to say for a Democrat. She considered liberals of any sort mere spokesmen for a welfare state in which the major human right was to claim government help for every citizen every moment of the day. She ridiculed conservatives for their tendency to mix capitalism with religion, making it seem an antirational philosophy, denying its basic assumptions and goals.[20] Ronald Reagan, darling of conservatives across the nation and one day to be president, earned her scorn for his views on abortion.

She has been called a libertarian. Many of her disciples did come from one or another strain of that tradition, and many returned to it when they left her. Yet she once told Branden that she hated the word "libertarianism," calling it a misnomer and a confusing term. She was never a member of any party or political movement and felt that her task was only to formulate a philosophic base on which radical capitalists could reestablish a golden age. She had strong political opinions; and it stands to reason that she wanted her ideas put into effect through the political process; yet she established no machinery for that purpose.

Among her "libertarian" themes and theories was the idea that all taxes should be voluntary. She acknowledged that the government needs money to perform the few meager tasks it has the right to perform for its citizens; but she denied that it has the right to confiscate funds for the purpose. She suggested from time to time that revenues be raised through a lottery, which she considered a self-imposed tax that would yield wealth to a few fortunate participants. If further revenues were needed, then citizens should be persuaded with good evidence to give voluntarily.

She considered the military draft of the 1960s unconstitutional, calling it involuntary servitude or slavery. She advocated a volunteer army, which of course came in

her lifetime. It is debatable whether the present army is as efficient as a conscripted one. It is certainly contrary to Rand's philosophy that taxes be imposed on the populace to support a collectivist body of mercenaries.[21] To be fair to her, however, what she had in mind was an army of individualists combining forces in moments of national peril as temporary volunteer defenders of freedom. It is no wonder that even the people who shared her libertarian spirit considered Rand naive on this point. It is also no wonder that she gained some uncharacteristic admirers when she opposed the war in Vietnam. To her it was an unjust war because it did not serve America's interests. It was being fought for "altruistic" reasons.

Rand also opposed public ownership of radio frequencies and television channels and said that they should all be sold to the highest bidders and then be classified private property. If the owners failed, they would be sold to more worthy owners, and capitalism would flourish. Yet she was in favor of retaining laws to protect patents and copyrights. They were to her, a writer, the owner of copyrights, the "legal implementation of the base of all property rights: a man's right to the product of his own mind." This is why, she explained, they are always under attack by collectivists, who say that all inventions should serve the common good by being tossed into the common pot (*C,* 122-33).

Philosophy: Good, Bad, Ugly

Rand blamed the current state of American politics and economics, the loss of individualism and capitalism, on the state of philosophy. She said we act as we do because we think as we do; and she was convinced that America's philosophic poverty stood in the way of its material progress and prosperity.

As we have seen, Rand believed that Aristotle was the greatest of philosophers, the one who showed mankind the truth. The key to his greatness, she thought, was that he trusted man's reason to give him a true picture of reality. Aristotle was lost to medieval Europe, due to the designs of religious mystics who feared him, and the twin oppressors Attila and the Witch Doctor held sway over a dark age. With the recovery of Aristotle by Thomas Aquinas came a Renaissance and the defeat of the Witch Doctor, and following the Renaissance came the industrial revolution and the defeat of Attila. It was at this moment, when men were truly free, that capitalist America was born. The golden age had dawned.

At this moment along came disaster in the person of Immanuel Kant. This German son of a Quietist mother followed in the steps of René Descartes, who had retreated into the Witch Doctor's jungle by questioning the objective reality of the visible world, and of David Hume, who had questioned man's sensual and conceptual faculties; and Kant was to complete this unholy trinity's work of misinformation by calling into question reason itself.

Kant was to Rand the subversive who bored from within to weaken and subvert the cause of reason while as a professor of philosophy, ostensibly an intellectual, claiming to defend it (*P,* 64). She considered him wrong on every major point of his philosophy. Not only did he consider man's mind impotent, saying that it can perceive only phenomenal and not noumenal reality; but he also said that in order to be moral a deed must be performed out of duty, not out of any sense of self-interest. He thus relegated man to the category of servant, enslaving him to mystical authority.[22]

Since Kant's day, Rand said, philosophy has declined precipitously. Nietzsche rejected the Witch Doctor, bully for him, but he elevated Attila to sainthood. Bentham identified capitalism with an oppressive duty to provide happiness to the masses. Spencer claimed that the moral justification for capitalism is the survival of the race and stressed cooperation at the expense of individualism. So the stage was set for Marx to elevate altruism to the level of pseudoscience and enslave half the world's population in a collectivist net. The result is that capitalism and individualism now have no philosophic base from which to operate. It was to provide this base that Rand wrote her novels and essays: to teach the remedial doctrine of Objectivism.

Atheism and Mysticism

Essential to that base, she believed, was atheism. An Objectivist, one dedicated to the restoration of individualism and the reconstruction of capitalism, must above all else not be deceived into believing in God. This of course made her a bedfellow to her despised "altruist" Karl Marx, and strange bedfellows they were, but Rand seemed not to notice or care. It may be that her early atheism resulted from a subconscious admiration for the Marxists who won the Russian soul when she was a girl, that as has been the case with many impressionable young people she incorporated the teachings of her tormentors. This might also explain the admiration she showed in early stories for communists. Whatever the source, she held firmly to her atheism throughout her life; and she believed it just as important to fight the Witch Doctor's mysticism as Atilla's collectivism.

For Rand a mystic was anyone who places another being or cause above man. She said Judeo-Christian mystics forced Aristotle out of Western thought and chained men and their ethics to the arbitrary will of God. With the second coming of Aristotle at the end of the Middle Ages, mystics lost control of man's mind; but through the work of the subversive Immanuel Kant a new type of mysticism rose up to chain men and ethics to what

was called the good of society, or the common good (*V,* 14). Rand spoke out against both kinds of mysticism in the name of man the individual.

Critics have long pondered Rand's antireligious posture. Some have charged that she reflected the typical Russian-Jewish intellectual's contempt for the mystic orthodoxy of the Third Rome, that Objectivism is an American form of anti-Christian Jewish rationalism. One is forced to observe that the composition of her disciples lends credence to this accusation. Yet despite the fact that she sounds more like an alien who does not understand the Western religious tradition than an insider who understands and rejects it, it must be said she is no more anti-Christian than anti-Jewish. She is not the typical anti-Semite some atheistic Jews tend to be, but she certainly has no rapport with her family's religious tradition. Her atheism denies both Jewish and Christian theism. She never spoke of Jews or of Israel or of the holocaust. Religion was to her simply incompatible with self-interest, the keystone of individualism and capitalism, incompatible with Objectivism.

She said that she became an atheist at age thirteen. It was in conversations with her father that she began to see that there was no reason to believe in God, that in fact theism implies the inferiority of man. Leonard Peikoff has noted that as early as 1934, when Rand was twenty-nine, she referred in her journal to religion as the major cause of man's lack of integrity. Already she was identifying religion and communism as brothers under the skin. Communism emerged from the Judeo-Christian tradition and bore striking resemblances to its ancestors; and both subordinated man to a higher power: religion to God, communism to the state. Both listed selflessness, not selfishness, as the highest virtue (***E*** [***The Early Ayn Rand***], 108).

Rand's atheism, she claimed, was benign. Her followers were to be atheists, but she denied any dreams of closing churches or synagogues. Yet she missed no opportunity to put in a good word for atheism or to show the damage theism does the human spirit. It was in fact her enthusiasm for atheism that led her to make the infamous Mike Wallace interview statement that the cross is a symbol of torture, that it teaches men to sacrifice superiority to inferiority,[23] a statement she would live to regret—and to deny.

Her denials led only to further misunderstandings. The fact was that Objectivism demanded atheism, and religion was the enemy. In the *Playboy* interview she told Alvin Toffler that she never called the cross a symbol of torture, nor did she say she preferred the dollar sign, the symbol of free trade and thus of the free mind, to it. This was all "cheap nonsense." But she went on to say that she did consider the dollar sign the symbol of free trade and a free mind; and she admitted that she regarded the cross as "the symbol of the sacrifice of the ideal to the non-ideal." It seemed to her that "Christ died on the cross not for his own sins but for the sins of the non-ideal people"; and since in the name of that act men are asked to sacrifice themselves for their inferiors, "that is torture."[24] The lines of distinction are ever so dim and thin.

Any embarrassment this incident caused her did not keep Rand from further criticisms of the church. In 1967 she condemned Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio,* charging that it demonstrated Catholicism's "impassioned hatred for capitalism." She seemed delighted that mysticism had shown its true colors. Mysticism, she went on, is antilife, for it hates to see men free and happy on earth, productive, climbing to the stars. She said that in recent times, as proved by this encyclical, the church had abandoned the great Thomas Aquinas and stepped backward toward the mind-hating, life-hating Augustine. It was marching toward a new dark age. The pope's words here were a "Requiem for Man" (***C,*** 297-315).

As we have seen, Rand's major complaint against American conservatism was its ties with religion. Leaders like William F. Buckley sold a "package deal" of capitalism and mysticism. Since mysticism's altruism and capitalism's self-interest are mutually exclusive, this "deal" is both logically contradictory and ideologically confusing. For Rand the best argument for capitalism is that it gives men self-esteem, while mysticism gives only oppressive humility. She longed to see a new breed of dedicated radical capitalists rise from the ashes of America's mixed economy, men and women free of all traces of theism (***C,*** 194-201).

Feminism

Rand was one of only a handful of successful American female novelists of the twentieth century. She was one of an even smaller group of successful female philosophers. By achieving both distinctions she was perhaps unique. It is therefore interesting to analyze her attitude, as a successful woman, toward womankind. Here, as in other dimensions of her thought, Rand was unconventional, unpredictable, provocative, and radical.

It is a generally accepted notion that men do not create convincing female characters for their fiction. With the possible exceptions of Somerset Maugham and Tennessee Williams, male writers seem able to portray only men. Rand successfully created male characters, preferred them, it would seem, often giving her women secondary roles; but her women, who had leads in the early works and near leads in the major ones, are as remarkable and memorable as any in fiction. Whether they are as convincing as they are remarkable depends perhaps upon whether one accepts Rand's sense of life. In either case they are memorable.

The women of the early fiction include the sad Irene Wilmer of **"The Husband I Bought,"** the vivacious, zany Jinx Winford of **"Good Copy,"** the wistful Claire Nash of **"Her Second Career,"** and the courageous Frances Volkontez of **"Red Pawn."** With Frances there is a distinct change of direction, attitude, and personality from the earlier women, perhaps because Frances is born of Rand's soul. She is neither tragic, cute, nor unfortunate. She accepts her lot, follows reason, and faces consequences with head held high. With her Rand begins to fashion women of enormous physical and psychological strength and beauty, feminine in appearance but masculine (by the definition of Rand's day) in temperament, will, and performance. Their only weakness is their weakness for men.

Karen Andre of ***Night of January 16th*** defies convention and public opinion to serve the needs of Bjorn Faulkner. Kira Argounova of ***We the Living*** sleeps with two men, the second to save the first, but ends her life alone and without apology, trying to escape the land that has made her what she is. The simple Gaea of ***Anthem*** is something of a reversion to earlier days, a woman of less will and intelligence than Karen and Kira; yet she too has the mind, will, and courage to flee her totalitarian state, and she succeeds where Kira failed. Like Kira and Karen, she wants nothing so much as to kneel at the feet of a great man.

In Dominique Francon of ***The Fountainhead*** Rand created a woman of great intellect and individualism who marries two wrong men because the love she shares with the great, right man Howard Roark is too good for a marriage bed in this imperfect world. Dominique is, by her creator's own admission, Ayn Rand in a bad mood. But Dagny Taggart of ***Atlas Shrugged*** is the woman Rand had sought all her life, herself in a good mood, at her best. Dagny is bright, rational, independent, productive, and sexually both promiscuous and selective. She dominates every scene without being obnoxious and makes love to her heroes without lowering herself to the level of mistress, wife, or mother. She shares the spotlight in Rand's circle of stars only with Karen Andre and Kira Argounova; and of the three she is the brightest and best.

It is easy to see, through the pages of her novels and plays, what Rand thought—consciously, unconsciously—of the feminine character. Implicitly evident in her fiction and explicitly stated in her philosophy is the conviction that women stand in awe of the superior male. "I am a man-worshipper," she told Edwin Newman. She said she wanted to look up to men, for to her this was an important part of being feminine. Women who do not accept the natural superiority of men, she said, are not really feminine.

Rand said that women can do any type of work, that no job is forbidden them, but that no true woman would want to be the boss of a man. She could not vote for a woman for president because a woman is not psychologically equipped to rule men. The essence of femininity is hero worship.[25] Even her Kira, Karen, and Dagny bask in the reflected glory of their man. Barbara Grizzuti Harrison has noted that Rand's are strong, dominant women subdued by stronger, more dominant men who stoop to kiss their ankles before raping them. They are perfectly capable of running the world but prefer to serve as playthings for males of the species.[26] They are content, despite their will and intelligence, to say to men, as does Gaea to Prometheus in ***Anthem***: "Your will be done" (***A,*** 105).

There is also in Rand's fiction, never acknowledged by its author or admitted by her followers, a *Tosca* theme. Her women all tend toward multiple love affairs, often more than one at the time, always of course for a noble purpose. Frances Volkontez of **"Red Pawn"** and Kira Argounova of ***We the Living*** make love to one man, in both cases a communist official, in order to save another, in both cases an enemy of the communist state. Dominique Francon of ***The Fountainhead*** makes love to Howard Roark but marries two other men before finally marrying him, just to prove her perverse point that their love is too good for this world. Dagny Taggart of ***Atlas Shrugged*** makes love to at least three of the book's heroes and seems poised at story's end to make love to all three and maybe to all four—all for the noblest of purposes. All three, or four, are like-minded rational capitalists, her kind of man because she is their kind of woman. Perhaps somewhere in Rand's psyche lay a desire for more than one man at a time; and while her philosophic essays never mention the fact, she probably believed her own wish was rooted in universal femininity.

Even more obvious in her fiction and even less admitted outside it, more obvious than the desire for multiple love affairs, is Rand's conviction that for a woman love-making is best when it is violent. At least three of her heroines are gloriously raped: Karen Andre the first time she meets Bjorn Faulkner in his office; Dominique Francon the first time she is alone with Howard Roark and virtually every time they meet thereafter; and Dagny Taggart when at last she meets the elusive John Galt in a New York City train tunnel. Sex is best, Dominique explains in her story, when the rapist holds his victim in utter contempt; and she refuses for years to marry Roark because she prefers extramarital rape to conjugal love-making. She considers husband Peter Keating's sincere passion for her absurd and will not make love to Gail Wynand on their cruise because it is what conventional people would expect her to do. Sex for Rand and her women should be a selfish act, performed by a man who wields his penis as roughly as he wields a stone drill in a quarry. There are strong hints of sadism and masochism in the pages that had to pass rather strict

censors in the 1940s and 1950s. They speak eloquently if mysteriously of the personal perversions of Rand's heroines and by implication of women everywhere.

Rand of course said plainly that love is a fulfillment of one's self, an expression of self-esteem. The object of one's love is important only to the degree that he or she fulfills one's own personal need. "Love is not self-sacrifice," she told Toffler in the *Playboy* interview, "but the most profound assertion of your own needs and values. It is for your own happiness that you need the person you love."[27] Only a man or woman with personal self-esteem, one who puts productive work above all else and self above the other person, can truly love. Only after Dominique has helped Roark blow up his housing project does she have the self-esteem to be his mate. Only then does she understand what Roark told her long before: "To say 'I love you' one must first know how to say the 'I'" (***F*** [***The Fountainhead***], 400). Furthermore, like-minded men and women of rational self-interest immediately recognize each other when they meet, knowing they can share Rand's selfish love.

In Rand's stories men love other men without homosexual implications, for the mutual rational self-interest they share; and women recognize the men worthy to receive their worship the same way. As Francisco d'Anconia tells Hank Rearden in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** the person one chooses as a lover is his own mirror image. People of reason find and recognize and love each other (***AS,*** 490). Yet Rand denied advocating promiscuity or hedonism. Pleasure, she corrected those who suggested such things, is a by-product and not a goal of love. "Only the pleasure which proceeds from a rational value judgment can be regarded as moral."[28] In real life her followers were not encouraged to act the way her fictional characters did. As a writer Rand was free, but as a woman she was conservative. Or so she said.

Despite her contention that "what is proper for a man is proper for a woman," presumably in sex as in labor, and despite saying that "women can choose their work according to their own purpose and premises in the same manner as men do,"[29] the feminist movement that sprang up after her 1964 *Playboy* interview caught her off-guard. She could not see what all the fuss was about. American women had things better than women anywhere on earth. They were loaded with luxuries and had a free choice of careers. She herself had held her own in a man's world and had succeeded as a playwright, novelist, and philosopher. The way she saw it, the women leading the feminist movement had to be man-haters, out to start a sex war more violent than a class or race war. There would be a masculine reaction and rightly so. Women should first take jobs open to them, prove themselves, then climb the ladder. They should not seek subsidies.[30] Yet she said there should never be a woman president because women are psychologically unequipped to preside over men.

Philosophy and Fiction

Even as a young writer Rand had a clear picture of what she wanted to say and how to say it. There were of course many elements of her "sense of life" that took time to mature, many that she never recognized, many she would not admit. But in the second part of her writing career she reflected at length on her fiction and interpreted as best she could its meanings and implications. This is a rare thing for a creative writer to do, something that only one who turns from fiction to philosophy can do. It is also tricky, for there is no objectivity, and the musings must be accepted with a healthy skepticism. But it is interesting to see what the old Rand thought the young Rand had been trying to do.

"One cannot write about life without discussing philosophy," Rand often said. All novelists are philosophers because their fiction inevitably reflects their interpretation of human existence. Some are aware of their "sense of life" and some are not; some express it explicitly and some do not. She identified herself as one vividly aware and unapologetically explicit. Some borrow a "sense of life" either from other writers or from the prevailing philosophy of the day, while others create one of their own, out of personal convictions, often at odds with prevailing trends. She created her own and boasted of it (***FN,*** preface).

The characters that populate Rand's fiction are born of her sense of life: heroes without flaws, villains without redeeming virtues; some more nineteenth century than twentieth, some more twenty-first. They are not the kind of people one meets on the street, yet they are more than symbols of nonmaterial ideas. Rand explained that she observed life around her, analyzed the way men act and why they do so, drew abstractions and captured the essence of motivation and moral virtue and vice, and then created characters from the abstractions and action from the motivation. Each of her characters is then an abstraction, each designed to demonstrate virtue or vice, all together telling a moral story.

Rand was undisturbed by the criticism that her characters do not appear in real life. She proudly admitted that while they had recognizable physical features they were abstractions, either all good or bad, each following his particular sense of life, each personifying a moral truth. Each character represented a sense of life for readers to study. Each one was a symbol of good or evil dressed in the real-life clothing of the work-a-day world.[31]

Romanticism

Rand called herself a romantic realist. By *realist* she meant that she wrote of this world and of present-day problems. By *romantic* she meant that she clearly delineated the choices in life that men can and should make,

not just the ones they generally do make. She was critical of the naturalism she saw in most contemporary fiction because it dealt only in the choice men of the common order make in life, usually conformist and without authenticity. It dealt with the accidents, not the essence of life. She believed that she alone presented life as it ought to be, through the lives of men and women who make the choices they can and should make. She was not out merely to describe the world but to change it as well. Her heroes and heroines, men and women of rational self-interest, choose their own destinies amid the real choices of life.

Rand strongly identified with nineteenth-century romanticism, particularly with its earliest manifestations. She mourned its demise and ridiculed the naturalism that supplanted it. She said romanticism's greatness lay in its recognition of man's faculty of free choice; and she believed that she alone among modern writers retained this romantic sensibility. But she also recognized romanticism's fatal error, its glorification of rusticity and consequently its condemnation of industry. She called romanticism a brilliant adolescent that invented an ingenious philosophy of man, only to choke on its own excesses, follow a false trail, fail to create a single convincing hero, and fall by the wayside to be replaced by the dreary naturalism that prevails today. She saw it as her own mission, that of a writer born out of time, to keep the romantic tradition alive, to avoid the pitfalls that destroyed it, and finally to restore choice to its rightful place in human thought and action.

Rand believed that literature—and indeed all forms of art—should be judged by the image of man it projects. If the hero of a novel is strong, competent, productive, able through free choice and rational self-interest to find happiness in this world, that work is good. If not, it is not.[32] She denied that literature should teach lessons, but she said that it should certainly show men the way to a better life. It is, she once said, "the indispensable medium for the communication of a moral ideal" (***R*** [***The Romantic Manifesto***], 121-22). In ***Atlas Shrugged*** the composer Richard Halley explains to Dagny Taggart that an artist (here a musician) is a businessman, trading his wares for Understanding (***AS,*** 78). Rand considered Victor Hugo the father of great fiction and Mickey Spillane one of his few true disciples, both because they present a clear choice between good and evil, both because they project a positive image of man.

Rand found most contemporary literature "philosophically immoral. Aesthetically, it bores me to death."[33] It had degenerated into the sewer and was devoted to depravity. She found it exhilarating that she was so often the object of denunciations, for it proved to her that she was the only modern novelist to declare openly that her soul was not a sewer, nor were those of her characters, nor were those of mankind. She believed that she was the only bridge between the promise of romanticism in the past and the hope of romanticism in the future. If there should be a romantic movement in days to come, she would be its morning star (***R,*** v-vi).

Hope

The future often did not look bright to Ayn Rand. Public schools, stripped of their mission by "progressive" theories of education, failed to teach children to think conceptually. Universities, themselves devoid of ideological foundations, were responsible for America's loss of direction. Yet despite her pessimism she claimed she had hope for the future.

Americans, she said, were still capable of rejecting irrationalism and altruism. They could still repeal the welfare state and return to capitalism (***P,*** 213-14). New intellectuals, inspired by Objectivism, could reestablish brotherhood with capitalist businessmen and march on to the victory the old intellectuals forfeited. Thus her battlecry, as she brushed away the dark clouds: "The intellectuals are dead—long live the intellectuals!" (***FN,*** 67).

Notes

1. Toffler, "A Candid Interview," 5.
2. Ibid.
3. William O'Neill, *With Charity Toward None: An Analysis of Ayn Rand's Philosophy* (New York, 1971), 18.
4. "An Interview with Edwin Newman," tape from Palo Alto Book Service, made available in 1980.
5. "Note on a Bestseller," 349.
6. "Selfishness Without a Self," *Ayn Rand Letter,* 4 June 1973, 4.
7. *Night of January 16th,* 5.
8. Toffler, "A Candid Interview," 7.
9. "Disturber of the Peace," 194.
10. Donegan, "A Point of View," 156.
11. Toffler, "A Candid Interview," 9.
12. Tuccille, *With Charity Toward None,* 17.
13. Branden, "Thank You Ayn Rand, and Goodbye," 59.
14. "Disturber of the Peace," [*Mademoiselle,* May 1962,] 172.
15. "An Interview with Edwin Newman."
16. "Tax-Credits for Education," *Ayn Rand Letter,* 13 March 1972, 1.

17. "The Only Path to Tomorrow," [*Reader's Digest,* January 1944,] 88.
18. "An Untitled Letter: Part II," *Ayn Rand Letter,* 12 February 1973, 1.
19. *Philosophy: Who Needs It?* 53-54.
20. "Interview with Edwin Newman."
21. Toffler, "A Candid Interview," 12.
22. "Interview with Edwin Newman."
23. "Note on a Bestseller," 349.
24. Toffler, "A Candid Interview," 9-10.
25. O'Neill, *With Charity Toward None,* 24.
26. Barbara Grizutti Harrison, "Psyching Out Ayn Rand," *Ms.,* September 1978, 29-30.
27. Toffler, "A Candid Interview," 7.
28. Toffler, "A Candid Interview," 8.
29. Ibid., 7.
30. "Interview with Edwin Newman."
31. *Night of January 16th,* 1.
32. "Disturber of the Peace," 194.
33. Toffler, "A Candid Interview," 11.

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Ronald E. Merrill (essay date 1991)

SOURCE: Merrill, Ronald E. "The Transition Period." In *The Ideas of Ayn Rand,* pp. 41-58. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1991.

[*In the following essay, Merrill focuses on the works Rand wrote during what he calls her "transitional period," including her two unproduced plays, her first major novel,* The Fountainhead, *and the novella* Anthem, *maintaining that it was during this phase in her career that she renounced her attachment to Friedrich Nietzsche and laid the groundwork for her own Objectivist philosophy.*]

Rand's career in America was close to its nadir in 1934. ***We the Living*** could not find a publisher; ***Penthouse Legend*** could not find a producer. With her savings running out, her husband unable to find work, her adopted country deep in the Great Depression, Rand might have been excused had she given way to despair.

During this period of stress—and perhaps in some way as a result of her emotional turmoil—Rand took the first decisive steps away from Nietzsche. Unfortunately, it is difficult to follow her progress in this critical transition; we only know that somehow, during the next three years, she renounced the Nietzschean superman in favor of Howard Roark.

Some evidence of Rand's thinking during this period is available from two plays: ***Ideal*** and ***Think Twice.***

The Enigma of *Ideal*

In all of Rand's output, there is no work which presents so many problems to the analyst as ***Ideal.*** Almost everything else she wrote is absolutely pellucid; the reader need never be in doubt as to what she is saying and what she means. ***Ideal*** provides a striking contrast.

The basic story is straightforward enough. Kay Gonda, a much-worshipped movie star, disappears; she is suspected of murder. We see her approach, one by one, a series of people who have written adoring fan letters, and ask for asylum. Each one fails her. A left-wing writer tries to sell her out for the reward money; an artist who has painted her again and again cannot even recognize her in the flesh; a preacher exhorts her to confess. All those who idolized her fail, when challenged, to value their ideal—except for Johnnie Dawes, an unemployed drifter. To clear her of suspicion, he confesses falsely to the murder of which she is accused, then commits suicide. In the final scene, we learn that Kay Gonda was innocent of the 'murder'; she framed herself for the crime, in order to discover the reaction of her fans.

Ideal was initially written as a novelette, and later transformed into a two-act play; it was never produced. The story (as Rand herself recognized[1]) would have been better left as a novelette; the narrative is simply not well suited to the stage, though Rand achieved a number of well-crafted dramatic touches. But it is not primarily literary problems that the play poses.

The direct interpretation of ***Ideal*** is straightforward. When put to the test, Gonda's admirers betray their professed ideal. On this level, the story is a condemnation of the almost universal lack of integrity, and the theme is very efficiently handled. As always, Rand retains her theme of loyalty to values.

The problem arises with the motivation of the two principle characters, Gonda and Dawes. Why does she go to such lengths to search for integrity? How could a person like Dawes possess that integrity?

Rand's difficulty in expressing these critical factors in the story indicates the deep-seated questioning of her own values while she was writing it. She was groping for an entirely new view of life at this time. Had ***Ideal*** been written a couple of years earlier it would likely have had a very different ending; perhaps with a disillusioned Kay Gonda staggering into a police station to give herself up and face trial and execution. In a Nietzschean world there is no integrity to be found in the masses, and the superman—or superwoman—whose spiritual fuel 'runs dry' is doomed.

For this is Gonda's motive: she creates for her fans an ideal world, an ideal person; but who is to be her ideal? She gives them the courage to face life; but who is to give her courage? She must know; is she the only person on earth who still pursues an ideal with integrity, who has not given up her childhood dreams? Is integrity possible at all? Like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, she comes down from her lonely pinnacle to the world of men—only to be disappointed.

Leonard Peikoff points out that Gonda, like Dominique in ***The Fountainhead,*** and like Rand herself ("in a bad mood"), suffers from an idealistic alienation from the world. In this sense, *Ideal* may be considered a first sketch for ***The Fountainhead.*** But Peikoff unjustly classes Gonda below Dominique. For, as we shall see, Dominique has already despaired as ***The Fountainhead***

begins; convinced that her ideal is unattainable, she acts as a destroyer. Kay Gonda, on the other hand, has not given up. She is desperate but not despairing. And in the end she does find—in a way—the integrity she is seeking.

But this brings us to the character of Johnnie Dawes, a most unlikely Rand hero. Physically he fits the bill: tall, a gaunt face, a hard mouth and steady eyes. But what else is there? A college graduate (with an unspecified major), he fails to hold even the job of a bellhop or a waiter. He shows no purpose in life; he is unable to live in the world as it is, but lacks the resolution to change it. "I'm nothing," is his description of himself.

His one value is his ideal, Kay Gonda. His one redeeming trait is his determination to act to protect his ideal. And to save her he dies, as he tells us, "perfectly happy."

In actual fact, Johnnie's action is unnecessary. Gonda is innocent—indeed, the 'murder' never even happened—and she is in no danger. But when her press agent condemns her for allowing Johnnie to die, she replies, "That, Mick, was the kindest thing I have ever done." For, as she has realized, his death was a kindness; Johnnie Dawes had no future.

Yet, in another way, Johnnie's death does save Gonda's life. This ultimate testimony to the possibility of human integrity gives her the conviction to go on living.

As Kay Gonda surveys her fans, Rand compares different responses to the disillusionment of childhood ideals—as a means, perhaps, of confronting the crisis in her own ideals. George Perkins, the first fan, simply gives them up for a life of pure convention. Chuck Fink, the leftist, holds to his ideals even when he learns that they are actually evil, and thus descends into an amoral viciousness. Dwight Langley, the artist, holds to an ideal but considers it impossible of achievement on earth. Claude Hix, the preacher, goes even farther; if an ideal should appear on earth rather than in heaven, it must be sacrificed. The playboy, Esterhazy, finds that he cannot climb out of the quicksand of cynicism which he so casually entered.

But Johnnie Dawes is no hero, either. He has retained a child's dedication to an ideal, but at the price of remaining a child. He has an ideal, he is faithful to her, he knows that he must not merely admire but act. He has a child's piercing emotional insight and empathy. But he has despaired—not of the world, but of himself. He too has betrayed his ideal—by refusing to grow up.

We now see the dramatic unity in the play's conclusion. Kay Gonda is not, after all, revitalized at the end. We see her exhausted, indifferent, almost bitter. She has not found what she wanted; but she has found, in the most direct possible way, that she must live. She is loyal to her ideal; Johnnie Dawes' escape is not for her. She has found the one person in the world with integrity: herself. And that integrity will not let her quit.

Ideal seems to have served Rand as a preliminary study in which she experimented with the theme of treason to values. Presently we shall see how this germ of an idea blossomed into the extraordinary plot of ***The Fountainhead.***

Think Twice

While writing ***The Fountainhead,*** Rand several times interrupted her work on the novel to complete smaller projects—primarily in the hope of developing some income. ***Think Twice,*** a two-act play written in 1939, was one of these projects. The play prefigures ***Atlas Shrugged*** in certain respects—notably in its combination of philosophical and mystery elements, and in its scientist hero. However, it appears to have functioned primarily as a sketch for ***The Fountainhead***—in particular, for the character of Ellsworth Toohey. Walter Breckenridge, the villain of ***Think Twice,*** is clearly a primitive, unfinished version of Toohey, her most complex and fascinating badman.

Breckenridge, like Toohey, is a power-luster acting in the guise of a humanitarian, who controls his victims by 'helping' them. This provides the root of the play's mystery element. On his birthday Breckenridge invites his victims to his new house, and uses the occasion to torment them with a sophisticated but nonetheless vicious sadism. It is hardly surprising that he is murdered before the first act ends.

As a mystery, the play fails; one can easily deduce the murderer, and not in the way Rand suggested either.[2] However, it is an exciting and entertaining drama. It richly merits production, and it is a pity that it never made it to the stage.

As a sketch for the character of Toohey, Breckenridge is only a skeleton. Indeed, his characterization, in the final analysis, is the play's major weakness. Breckenridge has too little to say for himself, and his final confrontation with his murderer is thereby lacking in the dramatic tension it deserves. It seems likely that Rand learned from this sketch that Toohey must be a more eloquent villain, more self-consciously evil—though, as we will see, this introduced new problems.

On the other hand, as a philosophical drama ***Think Twice*** is highly effective. In a marvelous piece of integrated symbolism, Rand dates the play on July Third and Fourth, with Independence Day for Breckenridge's

slaves announced by fireworks—climaxed by the pistol shot which kills him. Rand exercises brilliantly her talent for making a philosophical theme concrete.

The hero of ***Think Twice,*** Steve Ingalls, is clearly in the Objectivist rather than the Nietzschean mold—indeed, he seems more similar to John Galt than to Howard Roark. One must keep in mind, however, that the play was revised as late as the 1950s, while Rand was writing ***Atlas Shrugged***; the published version may not give us an accurate vision of her thinking at the time the play was originally written.

Writing these two plays clearly gave Rand a chance to develop key themes and characters which would appear in ***The Fountainhead.*** She now felt ready to tackle her masterwork, the novel she'd wanted to write all her life, the story of her ideal, her ultimate hero.

The Fountainhead

Judged purely as a piece of literature, ***The Fountainhead*** is Ayn Rand's best work. Although it lacks the enormous philosophical scope and the intricate multi-level organization of plot and theme that we find in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** the earlier book presents a fascinating and subtle interplay of ethical and psychological themes.

On one level, ***The Fountainhead*** is a treatment of Rand's professed theme: the ideal man, Howard Roark. She set out initially to portray the ideal man. It is no coincidence, one may suspect, that the book begins and ends with the words, "Howard Roark".

But she did not get far into the construction of the novel before encountering two serious problems. First, she simply was not ready to portray the ideal man; her ideas, her ideals, were in a state of flux at that time and she was far from having developed them sufficiently to accomplish her self-assigned task.

Second, from the point of view of literary technique, problems arise in writing a story about an 'ideal' person. To use a central character who is morally perfect makes it difficult to center the story on an internal moral conflict. Adopting a hero who has no psychological problems rules out centering the story on psychological conflict. Thus when we encounter an 'ideal' hero, the story usually involves a basic dilemma of some less fundamental sort, such as a physical challenge.

Rand resolved this problem in ***The Fountainhead*** by removing Roark from the lead role. In the novel as it exists, Roark is 'off stage' for over half of the book. Instead, Dominique Francon becomes the real protagonist. The plot-theme of the book now becomes something different: 'How would imperfect people react to the ideal man?' This makes it possible to center the plot on a moral conflict within Dominique—and, later in the book, Gail Wynand.

For, on this level, ***The Fountainhead*** is a novel about the sin of despair. Though Rand would no doubt have been horrified to hear it thus described, the book has a theme prominent in Christian theology. Hope (as in "faith, hope, and charity") is a virtue in Christian doctrine because its antithesis, despair, leads one to feel that it is permissible to sin. If evil is destined to inevitable triumph, why struggle to achieve virtue? This is precisely the fundamental premise of Dominique and Wynand. Having despaired, not believing that good can triumph, they permit themselves to do evil. Wynand uses his 'power' to exalt the banal in human existence, and to crush men who show signs of integrity. Dominique wastes her talents and, like Wynand, leaves a trail of agony behind her, as she does her best to destroy that which she most values, from statues, to Roark, to her own soul.

On still another level, ***The Fountainhead*** deals with the twin issues of independence and integrity. Rand's unification of these two virtues is not sufficiently appreciated. One of her objectives in the novel is to show that independence, in the end, must mean intellectual independence. The man who allows others to tell him what to think, thereby allows others to tell him what to do. Rand provides numerous examples of this principle, culminating in the illuminating scene where Peter Keating is reduced to abject slavery by Ellsworth Toohey. Rand goes on to show that integrity can exist only in the man who possesses intellectual independence. For the 'second-hander', dependent on others for his beliefs, can never resist their sway.

On still another level, Rand in ***The Fountainhead*** returns to her perennial theme: How can the good man live in an evil society? As we shall see, she still could not find a satisfactory answer to this riddle.

The Break With Nietzsche

But above all, ***The Fountainhead*** is Ayn Rand's explicit and final renunciation of the morality of Friedrich Nietzsche. Rand clearly intended this theme and she sets up the conflict quite explicitly early in the novel. When Henry Cameron retires, passing on the torch to Roark, he tells him that, of all the evil in the world, Gail Wynand represents what he has to fight. And in fact, one might well interpret the story as an allegorical struggle between Roark—representing, in a primitive form, Objectivist morality—and Wynand, representing Nietzschean morality—for the soul of Dominique—Rand's alter ego.

For Wynand is indeed the very incarnation of the Nietzschean superman. He is in the tradition of Rand's youthful whip-wielding aristocratic heroes. Though he

starts out as a slum boy, both of his parents are suggested to have been of 'good family'; his father's nickname, "the Duke", explicitly evokes aristocracy. Wynand rises without help, solely by means of his unique ability and his iron determination. Not for him the 'slave morality'; he regards himself as 'beyond good and evil'. With an explicit childhood decision he devotes his life to the pursuit of power.

Roark, by contrast, is the prototype of the Objectivist hero. It is very clear from a reading of Rand's out-takes from ***The Fountainhead*** (see ***The Early Ayn Rand***) that her vision of Roark was still evolving as she wrote the novel. The Roark who was excised, particularly in the 'Vesta Dunning' passages, retains vestiges of the superman: cruelty, violence, aloofness. The Roark who remains evolves still more during the story. As he matures (and as Rand matured), Roark becomes more emotionally open, more introspective, more willing to relate to, and value, other people.

Dominique Francon, like Rand's other heroines, is an expression of Rand's own personality. Like Rand, she struggles with the problem of existence in a world hostile to rationality. Rand described Dominique as "myself in a bad mood". But Dominique is this and much more; her extraordinarily complex and subtle psychology enriches the novel.

To paraphrase one of Rand's favorite quotations from Aristotle, one might describe Dominique as a neurotic—not as neurotics are, but as they should be. She is a fundamentally rational and even heroic person, driven over the edge by the devastating pressure of an irrational society. At the root of her personality is a moral flaw: despair. She has, quite explicitly, given up on life. She knows what is good—and she 'knows' that the good has no chance. Building on this single thesis, Rand constructs a complex and consistent personality. Her psychological insight is impressive on its own terms, and astounding when one realizes the extent to which she must have confronted her own internal conflicts to develop such an analysis.

At the beginning of the novel, we see Dominique living solely for amusement—the amusement of teasing and tormenting the people she despises. She has intentionally subjected herself to total emotional repression. When she finds a statuette that she loves, she destroys it—not, as she tells Alvah Scarrett, so that nobody else will see it, but so that she herself will not see it—because she cannot allow herself to feel what it makes her feel. After making a promising start as a journalist, she sabotages her own career for fear that she might come to enjoy it too much. She has no friends; she cares nothing for her father; when men embrace her, she feels no desire, nor even revulsion.

The fundamental, thematic conflict in the novel arises from the simple fact that for a woman of Dominique's intense life-force, this emotional repression is unsustainable. The crack in her armor is Howard Roark. This is the man who is her proper mate, a fitting hero. But how can she respond to him? Later in the story, Wynand, who faces the same problem, says that love could come to him only in a twisted form. In the same way, Roark can come to Dominique only as a 'rapist'.

The famous 'quarry sequence' shows Rand's literary technique at its best. Dominique's struggle to maintain—or rather to restore—her repression is described with masterful psychological insight. Roark, naive though he is at this stage, cannot but recognize her need: "Pressure is a powerful factor. It leads to consequences which, once started, cannot be controlled." It certainly does!

In the wake of her encounter with Roark, Dominique is compelled to follow the logic of her psychological premises. She must, of course, destroy him—not, as she says, to save him from the world's corruption, but to allow her to restore her repression. But she also realizes that she is faced with a further task: she must destroy not just Roark but herself. If values have no chance in the world, then her only value—her own integrity—is itself a threat to her. Ultimately she must degrade herself. This she attempts, first by marrying Peter Keating, then by agreeing to be rented (and later sold) to Gail Wynand.

And yet, she cannot succeed. Repeatedly she breaks down—she defends Roark at the Stoddard Temple trial; she warns Peter Keating not to marry her; she tries to torture Wynand, and then to save him from Toohey.

Paradoxically, it is by seeking her deepest degradation that Dominique finds the way out of her morass. Voluntarily prostituting herself for the benefit of a man she despises, she encounters Gail Wynand.[3] These two are similar in what they value, and in their treason to those values. It is this similarity which draws them to each other. But their marriage traps both of them into confrontation with their fundamental error. Intellectually, Dominique cannot avoid seeing, exposed at close range, Wynand's treason to his own values—and he cannot avoid seeing hers. Emotionally, Dominique cannot avoid responding to Wynand—just as he cannot make of her just another mistress to be toyed with and discarded. But by opening themselves to such emotions they both begin to experience the break-up of their defensive repression.

The return of Howard Roark from exile at just this point completely upsets the already tottering emotional balance of Dominique and Wynand. Unable to return to their repressed state, they are drawn by Roark back to reality, to the necessity of values and the need to fight for them.

The plot-climax, the dynamiting of Cortlandt Homes, serves to bring to a crisis Dominique's internal conflict as well as Wynand's. Finally they renounce their treason and fight together for Howard Roark and the values he represents. But their crime—treason, the deepest and vilest of crimes, which dooms one to freeze in the ninth circle of hell—cannot be expiated so easily. Dominique, in an ecstasy of self-mutilation that virtually compels comparison to religious penitence and mortification, nearly kills herself. Wynand fares even worse; he closes the *Banner* and actually does kill himself.[4]

Why is Dominique redeemed but not Wynand? Essentially, because of Roark. Dominique, a woman, can recenter her values on the man she worships. This gives her a base on which to rebuild her life. But Wynand, having dedicated his life to power, has nothing left when he sees that power is worse than worthless. The superman, with his 'morality of masters', is revealed to be the slave of the masses he despises. His dream of a Wynand Building becomes a mockery and a reproach; he is too old to go back to Hell's Kitchen and start from scratch. For Gail Wynand, as for Johnnie Dawes, there is only one way out, only one way he can serve the ideal he recognizes.

A Traditional Antithesis

Part of the nineteenth-century literary tradition in which Rand was steeped was the novel based on contrast of antitheses. We see this in such titles as *Sense and Sensibility, Crime and Punishment, War and Peace.* Rand begins ***The Fountainhead*** by setting up a comparison of this type: the man of independent thought, Howard Roark, and the intellectual 'second-hander', Peter Keating. This effective literary device, by contrasting the two personalities and society's reaction to them, helps to clarify and define Roark's personal character.

Those who condemn Rand for creating only 'black and white' characters ought to be surprised and pleased by Peter Keating. He is as 'gray' as they could ask for. Keating is a man of no small ability; critics who portray him as an incompetent are missing Rand's point. Keating has the intellectual potential to become a first-rate artist—his original ambition—or even a first-rate architect. But his failure to establish independence arrests the development of his abilities. Achievement and ability, like all other values, depend on independence.

Keating is a sort of amateur—or let us say, small-time, petty—Gail Wynand. While congratulating himself on his manipulation of other people, he fails to notice that it is he who is being pushed around. He allows himself to be talked out of the career he wants, of the wife he wants, of everything that might bring him satisfaction in life.[5] In the end he has nothing to show for his life, in spite of—indeed, because of—all the 'practical' compromises he has made.

The Impossible Villain

Rand's depiction of Peter Keating is a classic of psychological insight. He perfectly fulfills his literary role as a foil for Roark. But he cannot for a moment be visualized as the villain of the piece. That role must go to the inimitable Ellsworth Toohey.

Like his embryonic precursor, Walter Breckenridge, Toohey persuades young people to forsake the careers they love, thus depriving them of joy in their work. But compared to Toohey, Breckenridge is a beginner. Toohey is a master criminal, a Moriarty of the mind. He uses a whole arsenal of techniques to destroy his victims. He advises them to indulge in casual sex—and avoid serious romance. He presses Peter Keating to marry for prestige and professional advancement instead of love. He advocates compromise of moral principles as not only unavoidable but desirable. He uses humor as a weapon to ridicule and degrade anything good. He attacks integrity, independence, and reason.

Toohey, the quintessential Randian villain, seems to be a caricature of her philosophical arch-enemy, Immanuel Kant. If one wishes to look at the novel in allegorical terms, one might say that Rand has realized that Nietzsche's approach, as exemplified by Gail Wynand, is unable to deal with Kant/Toohey; it is only Objectivism, as embodied in Howard Roark, that can defeat him.

But Rand pays a price for making Toohey such a perfect personification of evil. The character ultimately loses psychological reality: One meets Peter Keating every day, and one can imagine meeting Roark or Wynand, but one could never meet Ellsworth Toohey. The problem is that Toohey not only is evil, but knows that he is evil. He has no self-delusion in him. Nobody could function in reality on such a basis; in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** Rand makes James Taggart go mad on being confronted with his own evil. So Rand ends up using Toohey not really as a character but as a personification of evil. He might best be compared to Goethe's Mephistopheles.

Western literature has long displayed a sort of fascination with the personification of evil, and what Toohey lacks in psychological realism he more than makes up as a brilliant specimen of demonology. He makes a tawdry, contemptible Satan, much more in the style of C.S. Lewis than of Milton or Goethe. But he is all the more effective a tempter for that.

Intellectual Snobbery

As she delineates Toohey's little games, Rand provides an analysis of one of the most common, and frustrating, con games of our century: intellectual snobbery. Today

more than ever, what passes for high culture is dominated by those who pretend to admire the ridiculous, the incomprehensible, the disgusting, and sneer at those who 'can't understand'.

Any young person who has studied Heidegger; or seen Ionesco's 'plays'; or listened to the 'music' of John Cage; or looked at Andy Warhol's 'paintings'—has experienced that feeling of incredulous puzzlement: But this is nonsense! Can I really be expected to take this seriously?

In fact, of course, it is necessary for it to be nonsense; if it made sense, it could be evaluated. The essence of modern intellectual snobbery is the 'emperor's new clothes' approach. Teachers, critics, our self-appointed intellectual elite, make it quite clear to us that if we cannot see the superlative nature of this 'art'—why, it merely shows our ignorance, our lack of sophistication and insight. Of course, they go beyond the storybook emperor's tailors, who dressed their victim in nothing and called it fine garments. The modern tailors dress the emperor in garbage.

Rand brilliantly exposes this deception, and her portrait of Lois Cook, an emperor's tailor if there ever was one, provides some of the novel's most entertaining and illuminating scenes.

A Seamless Patchwork

In the first draft of ***The Fountainhead*** the story focus on Howard Roark was stronger and more personal. Part of this narrative described Roark's first sexual experience, an affair with the aspiring actress Vesta Dunning, which ends when she sells out her ideals to get good parts. By the time Rand finished Part One of the book, technical problems were already apparent. When the publisher asked for cuts, she took advantage of the opportunity to eliminate Vesta and recast the structure of the novel.

By removing the 'Vesta Dunning' passages from ***The Fountainhead*** Rand effectively conceded her change of the novel's theme. Having dropped her original intention of centering the story on Roark, she had to tighten the story's focus on Dominique as the female protagonist; Vesta had to go. Much of the material removed had Roark on stage, so that the new focus of the story on Dominique was further enhanced.

The primary plot-line of ***The Fountainhead*** narrates Dominique's struggle with herself. Her internal conflict involves both a moral issue—treason to values—and a psychological issue—emotional repression. Rand intertwines these two strands skillfully to weave the basic thread of the plot.

In keeping with its paradoxically Christian theme, ***The Fountainhead***'s primary plot is analogous to that of Dante's *Inferno*: The protagonist, having lost the right way, voluntarily enters Hell, confronting the meaning of evil and finally finding the way out at the very bottom. Dominique, in her downward progression, encounters successively more serious sins, from the venial offenses of Guy Francon, through Keating and Hopton Stoddard and Lois Cook, until she is faced with her own crime in the person of Gail Wynand.

This, the 'new' plot, is spliced into Rand's 'old' plot so smoothly one scarcely notices the joining. The original story of the antithesis between Roark and Keating is arranged as contrary motion. In the first section of the book, we see Keating rise and Roark fall. In the last section, their roles are reversed. In between, the 'old' plot is more or less suspended and Dominique's Dantesque journey of self-discovery takes center stage.

The third strand of the story is, quite literally, a plot: Ellsworth Toohey's campaign to take control of the Wynand empire. This line of action serves several functions in the story, the most important of which is the development of the climax—the Cortlandt bombing and the Wynand strike struggle.

It will be seen that ***The Fountainhead*** is far more complex in structure than ***We the Living.*** Rand's ability to develop a multilevel plot structure and tie together several major story lines represents another advance from her earlier work. Her false start was corrected so skillfully one can scarcely see the repair lines.

Acquittal Unsatisfactory

When it comes to Rand's lifelong dilemma—the survival of reason and heroic achievement in a hostile world—***The Fountainhead*** fails to present a convincing solution. The novel, as we have seen, treats the issue of the sin of despair. Rand rejects despair, but she has no real answer yet. The book ends on a note of triumph, but Roark's vindication ultimately rests on faith. A jury of 'the common man' acquits Roark after hearing his courtroom speech in defense of individualism. This doubtless reflects Rand's experience as a soapbox orator during the Wendell Willkie campaign, which gave her an abiding respect for the commonsense rationality of the (literal) 'man in the street'. The same phenomenon is used in the scene of Rearden's trial in ***Atlas Shrugged.*** There, however, it becomes merely an incident, rather than a resolution. Rand by then recognized that the 'common man's' response to reason is temporary; when the influence of the rational hero is removed, the 'common man' returns to irrationality.

Thus, to the reader, Roark's acquittal fails to carry conviction. However, ***The Fountainhead*** does at least give a hint of the solution that Rand will find in ***Atlas***

Shrugged. By renouncing Nietzsche she comes to the concept of the impotence of evil. Says Roark to Toohey, "But I don't think of you." This is the attitude that Rand's earlier characters aspire to, but cannot achieve. Howard Roark is an assertion that the heroic man can defeat the excruciating pressure of society by sheer grit. Unfortunately, in practice this tends to reduce to avoiding alienation by means of emotional repression—the trap into which Dominique and Wynand fall. So this answer did not satisfy Rand, and she returned to the problem in ***Atlas Shrugged.*** Ultimately she found her solution in the concept of the "sanction of the victim".

The Embryo of Objectivism

With Roark's courtroom speech at the climax of ***The Fountainhead,*** Rand decisively cuts her ties with Friedrich Nietzsche. The power-seeking 'superman' is explicitly classed with the altruist as merely another 'second-hander'. The true egoist, Rand has decided, is not the ruler but the creator. Morality is not a chain for slaves but the root of freedom.

But though Rand had finally crossed the border, she had not yet reached the capital of the terrain which was to become Objectivism. That became her next task.

Nonetheless, several of the basic ideas of Objectivism are explicated in ***The Fountainhead.*** Reliance on reason, not yet a major theme, is nonetheless clearly adopted. A related idea, the impotence of evil, is explicit in the novel. Roark's final speech is devoted primarily to the key concepts of creativity and self-generated action as the proper life for man. We can see the roots of the Objectivist ethics, but they are still unsupported. During the next 13 years Rand laid the groundwork in metaphysics and epistemology that would put the Objectivist ethics on a firm footing.

Anthem

Even as she wrote ***The Fountainhead*** Rand was experimenting with new ideas and new techniques for later use. Among other things, she began to develop a fascination for the idea of the scientist or engineer as hero. In Steve Ingalls she presents us with a new type. She did one more sketch before tackling her greatest scientist-hero, John Galt. This was Unity 5-3000, the hero of ***Anthem.***

The novelette ***Anthem*** was produced during another interruption of Rand's work on ***The Fountainhead.*** This short but powerful story provides a further premonition of ***Atlas Shrugged,*** particularly in stylistic matters. The narrative makes scarcely a pretense of 'romantic realism'; the style is that of fantasy, sometimes more like poem than prose, quite unique among Rand's works. The stylistic influence of Nietzsche is evident, particularly in the eleventh chapter, which is strikingly similar to the opening of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* The actual events of the story range from improbable to impossible; it is the ideas that count.

Rand adopts a literary technique popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the diary-narrative. The story supposedly is an account written by the hero. The text thus consists solely of a sequence of flashbacks; each chapter jumps ahead in the story, maintaining a high level of suspense until the narrative explains what led up to the new situation. Though old-fashioned, this technique can be highly effective and it is still used (for instance, in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*).

The story employs a classically Randian gimmick: In a collectivist, totalitarian world of the future, the very word 'I' has been eliminated from the language. The conflict between individualism and collectivism is thereby reduced to its ultimate fundamentals.

Rand uses this story to illuminate an issue also basic to ***The Fountainhead***: the individual as the source of human knowledge and progress. ***Anthem,*** in contrast to other collectivist dystopias, forecasts no universal electronic surveillance networks, no manipulative biotechnologies, no domed cities or spaceships. Instead, we are shown a collectivist government that has just accomplished, with no small difficulty, the transition from torches to candles. Rand drives home the point by making her hero a self-made scientist, who rediscovers electricity and uses it to make light. The symbolism is effective.

Indeed, Rand may have intended ***Anthem*** as a response to the influential Russian dystopia *We,* written by Yevgeny Zamiatin in 1920-1921.[6] Like *We,* ***Anthem*** uses the device of a naive narrator in a world in which names have been replaced by numbers. But here the similarity ends. Zamiatin's hero, like those of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World,* revolts against an allegedly scientific and logical society in the name of love, poetry, and emotion. D-503, a scientist of the One State, is led into rebellion under the sexual domination of a female mystic. His evident masochism makes his final submission to authority plausible.

Rand, on the other hand, champions reason and science as the enemies of totalitarianism. Her hero, assigned as a street-sweeper, makes himself into a scientist. He is a leader, not a follower, in his rebellion, and his love interest is an adoring and submissive young girl.

The story begins with a superb hook ("It is a sin to write this.") and never drags for an instant. Its inspirational and often poetic narrative is interspersed with just the right amount of Rand's distinctive humor (as for instance the heroine's behavior on her first encounter with a mirror).

In ***Anthem,*** Rand's concept of the impotence of evil is enhanced and expanded. The men of evil now are seen as almost comically helpless and incompetent, fleeing like roaches from the light created by the book's hero. Like John Galt, ***Anthem***'s hero is a scientist and inventor who develops a new source of energy. And the climax, in which he establishes a remote mountain refuge of reason, looks ahead to Galt's Gulch.

'The Simplest Thing in the World'

Also written during Rand's transition period was the short story, **'The Simplest Thing in the World'.** The hero of this little piece is a talented—and therefore starving—writer. Winning a struggle with his artistic integrity, he resolves to write a piece of hackneyed formula fiction, just to bring in some money. Rand takes this classic cliché and gives it a twist. Her hero sets out to do a potboiler—and finds he can't do it. Not because of his scruples, but simply because every conventional, boring plot idea suddenly takes an ingenious twist.

Rand depicts with a sure hand the petty humiliations of an impecunious man during the Depression, which were so familiar to her. But ultimately the story is frustrating to the reader who would like to hear the full tale of the virtuous blackmailer and the other characters that Rand casually tosses off.

Notes

1. As reported by Barbara Branden: *The Passion of Ayn Rand,* p. 148.
2. Serge Sookin is deliberately given an alibi by Steve Ingalls. Since only the murderer could have known in advance the time of the murder, Ingalls must be the culprit.
3. Note an interesting parallel between Kira and Dominique, both of whom initiate romantic relationships with aristocratic 'supermen' by acting as prostitutes. Similarly, in *Penthouse Legend,* Karen Andre's affair with Bjorn Faulkner begins when he attempts to buy her favors for a thousand kroner. Even in *Atlas Shrugged* there is a hint of the same theme, when Rearden and Dagny wish that they had begun their affair in such a way.
4. While the book is ambiguous about Wynand's suicide, Rand made it explicit in the movie version of *The Fountainhead.*
5. In a well-known scene in the second chapter of *The Fountainhead,* Roark is asked by Keating whether he should accept a scholarship in Europe or go to work for Guy Francon. Roark chides him for asking advice on such a crucial decision, but recommends taking the job. Keating might have done better not to take Roark's advice—had he gone to the Beaux Arts he would have had a second chance to correct his career choice and become an artist. One wonders if Rand did this intentionally; the ironic illustration of her point might have tickled her fancy.
6. The book was not published until 1924, and never at all in the Soviet Union, though it may have circulated via *samizdat.* Zamiatin lived in Petrograd during the 1920s, at the same time as Rand; prominent in literary circles, he was a leading anti-Bolshevik intellectual. Rand must surely have been familiar with his work.

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Chris Matthew Sciabarra (essay date 1995)

SOURCE: Sciabarra, Chris Matthew. "Art, Philosophy, and Efficacy." In *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical,* pp. 202-29. University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.

[*In the following essay, Sciabarra articulates "Rand's view of the fundamental nature of art and its function in human life," stating that, for her, the essential function of art is not social but "epistemological," in that it is primarily concerned with the "nature of human consciousness," and linking her aesthetic theories with the broader Objectivist concept of "the will to efficacy."*]

Throughout Rand's writings, one can find a persistent emphasis on the process by which human beings articulate the tacit dimensions of consciousness. This theme

is implicit in Rand's theories of concept formation and emotion. The concept formation process is largely dependent on an act of measurement omission, which takes place in the mind whether people are aware of it or not. By articulating the tacit principles by which people form concepts, Rand attempted to provide an objective foundation for human knowing. She suggested that even though measurement omission is a tacit process, it is necessary to make explicit its reality-based principles in order to defend the objective integrity of our knowledge.

The Objectivist theory of the relationship between reason and emotion stresses a similar articulation process. By delving deeply into the inarticulate contents of the mind, and the habitual methods by which the subconscious integrates these contents, we can make explicit that which is implicit. Rand sought to provide an objective account of human emotional response. Even though we may be unaware of the cognitive roots of many of our emotions, she argued, it is both possible and desirable to initiate a therapeutic articulation process.

Thus both in concept formation and in emotional discernment, Rand's Objectivism aims to bring implicit elements of consciousness into more thoroughly explicit, articulated form. She suggested that knowledge and emotions are not mysterious, ineffable phenomena beyond our comprehension and control. Understanding the components of our consciousness enables us to better integrate—and alter, if necessary—the contents and methods of awareness.

Rand extended this impulse toward articulation into the realm of aesthetics and ethics. She attempted to show how the interaction of the conscious and the subconscious can move people toward acts of spiritual and material creativity.

The Function of Art

In this section, I am concerned with Rand's view of the fundamental nature of art and its function in human life, rather than with Rand's personal artistic tastes, or her specific views on literature, painting, music, aesthetic judgment, or beauty.[1]

One of the most distinctive aspects of Rand's theory is her belief that "the source of art lies in the fact that man's cognitive faculty is *conceptual.*"[2] For Rand, the central function of art is not social, but epistemological. Certainly art reflects the cultural milieu, but its *essential* function pertains specifically to the nature of human consciousness. The mind grasps the infinite complexity of the world by reducing the number of units with which it must grapple. As we have seen, concept formation and definition also serve this cognitive need for unit economy. By abstracting various aspects from a totality and forming relational units, our minds synthesize an infinite number of similar concretes under a particular concept, designated by a particular word. The efficiency of our cognitive processes depends upon how well we have automatized and integrated these units.[3]

Art is the product of a comparable tacit process in which the artist's "metaphysical value-judgments" are concretized. As we have seen, such metaphysical abstractions pertain broadly to the nature of existence. They are usually held subconsciously, in an implicit form, as a component of our sense of life. Metaphysical value judgments are core evaluations of the self, the world, and other people. For most people, they are not consciously deduced judgments, but are an unintended, emotionally charged consequence of innumerable life experiences, from the earliest moments of childhood on.

While an art work, like every human creation, involves the application of both explicit and implicit knowledge, articulated and tacit skills, it remains far more dependent on the artist's subconscious integrations than on any conscious philosophical convictions. And "since artists, like any other men, seldom translate their sense of life into conscious terms," they are just as likely to produce works of art that project all of the tensions and contradictions of their inner worlds.[4]

Rand defined art as "*a selective re-creation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value-judgments*" (***Romantic Manifesto,*** 19). Guided by their sense of life, artists automatically isolate and integrate those aspects of reality which epitomize their unique views of the world. Their creations therefore emphasize the aspects they regard as important. Since the building blocks of knowledge derive, in Rand's view, from perception, art completes the epistemic circle by bringing one's most important metaphysical abstractions back to the perceptual level. Every art form fulfills this same function. An artist's metaphysical abstractions can be concretized in a variety of material, visual, or auditory forms, in literature, sculpture, painting, or musical composition. Rand argued that despite technological innovations, the basic art forms have remained constant since the prehistoric period because they depend on sensory, perceptual, and conceptual means of consciousness that are innate to the human species.[5]

Rand's understanding of the creative process was informed by her introspection into her own literary craft. In writing, Rand argued, authors draw on the knowledge stored in the subconscious mind. The capacity to summon such knowledge must be so automatized that the author "just knows" what to do as if by "instinct." In constructing plot and character, authors can program their subconscious minds to direct their conscious thoughts.[6] Authors achieve a "feel" for their craft that follows from the logic of their own literary context.

Harking back to an Aristotelian aesthetic, Rand argued that in the totality of the author's creation, the parts and the whole generate and imply each other.[7] Rand explained that in her own writing, she created descriptions on four distinct, though interrelated, levels: the literal, the connotative, the symbolic, and the emotional. While she never calculated these interconnections consciously, she presented the reader with a totality—an integrated, emotional sum that provoked a corresponding emotional response.[8]

According to Rand, the artist and the responder enter into a communicative interaction.[9] The artist begins with a broad abstraction that he or she concretizes in the art work. The responder perceives and integrates the particulars, grasping the abstraction concretized by the artist. The communicative circle is completed through two interacting psycho-epistemological moments. The first resembles a process of deduction, in which there is a movement from a broad, general abstraction to a specific, concrete, artistic expression. This is a movement from the artist's core evaluation to an aesthetic, concrete embodiment in literary, visual, or auditory form. The second moment of the circle resembles a process of induction, in which there is a movement from the artist's concrete forms to the responder's emotional experience. This experience in turn, reflects the responder's own sense of life.[10]

The responder experiences not only the content of an artist's work, but the artist's style as well. Both the content and style reflect the artist's sense of life. Artists choose subjects that manifest their metaphysics, their views of existence, what they believe to be worthy of contemplation. An artist's style reveals his or her psycho-epistemology; it is the manner in which the artist presents the subject.[11] Artists may choose to present the heroic or the mediocre, the triumphant or the vanquished. They may do so in stark, precise terms, or in blurred abstractions (40-41). Every aesthetic choice made by the artist, every aesthetic experience of the responder, is a psychological confession (N. Branden 1967T, lecture 18). While Rand presumptuously claimed that she could pinpoint the exact nature of the confessions involved, she admitted that it can be very difficult to infer the basis of these choices and responses because there are many cross premises at work in the human psyche (in Peikoff 1976T, lecture 11). Nevertheless, when one responds positively to a work of art, one experiences a certain congruence with the artist's sense of life. When one responds negatively to a work of art, one's sense of life is at odds with the artist's projections.[12] Thus, an art work will confirm or contradict the responder's fundamental outlook on reality.[13]

Though Rand analyzed this communicative interaction between artist and responder in epistemic terms, she recognized that every art work has cultural implications. Each individual's psycho-epistemology and sense of life, developed mainly in early childhood, is influenced by the dominant values and ideas of the culture in which he or she lives.[14] A culture may stress the importance of independence or obedience, of reason or religion. Just as an art work is a reflection of the artist's soul, so, too, it is a barometer of the culture. However, Rand did not posit strict cultural determinism.[15] She did not believe that the individual artist slavishly mimics the values of the culture at large. But most artists, like most individuals, tacitly absorb the dominant ideas of their age. Although a few artists may rebel against the dominant views, the vast majority will give material expression to a culturally specific sense of life.[16]

In absorbing dominant artistic and cultural fashions, the majority also tends to accept the dominant moral trends. It is for this reason perhaps that Rand conjoined her aesthetic and ethical visions. Although all art fulfills a fundamental epistemic need to concretize humanity's broadest abstractions, Rand argued that literature in particular can serve as a means of communicating a moral ideal as well. From the sacred texts of religion to the pages of ***Atlas Shrugged,*** the most abstract moral codes have found concrete literary expression. Through literature, Rand hoped to provide an image of things not as they are but as they "ought to be." Whereas an ethical code can enunciate abstract moral principles, only literature can create a concretized model for their application in the realm of human action. In Rand's words, "Art is the technology of the soul."[17]

Rand's literary credo can be made the subject of a book in itself.[18] Yet it must be mentioned that Rand saw herself as promulgating a new Romantic literary tradition. She was influenced by such nineteenth-century Romantic writers as Hugo, Dostoyevsky, Schiller, and Rostand. Like these writers, she was deeply concerned with the realm of moral values. She argued that the Romantic movement celebrated the individual as an efficacious being of free will. It partially and implicitly affirmed the Aristotelian sense of life and the individualist culture of nineteenth-century capitalism. But the Romantic movement was, she points out, full of inner contradictions. Its brand of individualism was antimaterialist and emotionalist. As the movement collapsed under the weight of its internal conflicts, its writers were criticized for presenting escapist novels bordering on fantasy.[19] The Romantics were opposed by the Naturalists, who accepted the premises of determinism. Viewing human beings as puppets of their environment, the Naturalists set their stories in more contemporary, "realistic" settings. In keeping with her dialectical impulses, however, Rand rejected the traditional Romantic-Naturalist dichotomy and viewed herself as a "Romantic Realist."[20] As a Romantic, Rand aimed to project a

vision of the ideal man. As a Realist, she presented her moral vision almost exclusively in a contemporary, this-worldly context.[21]

Like other aspects of her thought, Rand's literary aesthetic was an outgrowth of her Russian intellectual roots. As both novelist and philosopher, Rand remains true to the rich Russian literary tradition. Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and the Symbolist poets all strove to integrate literature with philosophy. Having grown up in the Silver Age, Rand was exposed to the Symbolist's Nietzschean imagery. The Symbolists, such as Blok, Bely, and Merezhkovsky, believed that the artist should be a Promethean superman, aiming for the "transvaluation of values." Like Nietzsche, the Symbolists were both poets and philosophers. Beginning with the facts of the real world, rather than in the realm of fantasy, they aimed to transform that world. In Bely's words: "Art finds its support in reality. The reproduction of reality is the goal of art or its point of departure. Reality is like food in relation to art, without which its existence is impossible" (Shein 1973, 311).

If the Symbolists saw reality as the basis of art, they saw art itself as the essential creative human activity. Art was the means of creating a new culture that would transcend the limitations of the old. Literary artists were exalted for their desire to solve existential questions and to achieve the Ideal.[22]

While Rand would have opposed the explicitly Dionysian ideal of Russian Symbolism, she appears to have fully absorbed its impulse to transform culture through art. Though Rand had argued that "*art is not the means to any didactic end,*" she acknowledged that one of its most important "secondary consequences" is its ability to educate and influence.[23] In this regard, Rand's Romantic Realist credo is similar in spirit to Socialist Realism. The Socialist Realists believed that art was a positive, constructive, political activity. The artist served as a critic of the social order, projecting a dialectical resolution. When Stalin described the writer as the "engineer of the human soul," he echoed the beliefs of the Nietzschean Marxist God-builders, who saw art as the prime mover of this social transformation.[24] The new Soviet man was projected as an integrated being of theory and practice, a thinking man of action. In characterizing art as the "technology of the soul," Rand projected a different ideal achieved through similar literary means.

Rand's literary method of actualizing this ideal was fully Russian. Like Dostoyevsky and other writers of the Golden Age of Russian literature, Rand created characters based on the ideas they embodied. This method sometimes lacks the depth of an approach in which the characters' psychological development is detailed. It seeks conflict resolution in the interactions of characters who embody key principles (N. Branden 1989, 88).

In writing her fiction, Rand began with the real-concrete, that is, with the world as perceived by her in all of its particularity. Through inductive reasoning and abstraction, she broke down the whole into concepts. Her characters became thought-concretes, reconstituted on the basis of her abstraction. She stated: "My characters are persons in whom certain human attributes are focused more sharply and consistently than in average human beings."[25] These characters embody *essential* principles. Their actions arise from ideas that inform their identity. Rand omits the accidental and the contingent from her characterizations, while she emphasizes primary motivations. In the novel, as in life, Rand was "interested in philosophical principles only as they affect the actual existence of men; and in men, only as they reflect philosophical principles. An abstract theory that has no relation to reality is worse than nonsense; and men who act without relation to principles are less than animals" (107-8).

Rand concretized her abstractions in the characters of her creation. In ***The Fountainhead,*** for instance, she isolated and identified the principles, stages, and variations of what she called the "diseased ego." Based on this broad abstraction, Rand created a range of characters representing "second-handers"—those who lived *through* others, rather than by their own effort.[26]

Rand believed that her literary method was an instance of the creative process in general. In her view, "the creative process is, in a way, the reverse of the learning process." Both learning and creativity constitute a cycle in which there is a movement from the "concrete to the abstract to the concrete." In creating her characters, Rand first derived abstractions from concrete instances. She then concretized the abstraction "in order to achieve [her] own purpose (in the concrete)." In her notes for ***Atlas Shrugged,*** she wrote:

> In order to think at all, man must be able to perform this same cycle: he must know how to see an abstraction in the concrete and the concrete in an abstraction, and always relate one to the other; he must be able to derive an abstraction from the concrete . . . then be able to apply this abstraction both as guide for his future specific actions and as standard by which to judge the specific ideas or actions of others.[27]

In Rand's view, those who accept one part of this cognitive cycle, but not the other, are doomed to partiality and distortion. "The cycle *is* a cycle," Rand emphasized. The cycle is "unbreakable; no part of it can be of any use, until and unless the cycle is completed" and rationally grasped by the mind. Rand compared the pro-

cess to an electric circuit, which must remain unbroken if it is to generate a current. A circuit "does not function in the separate parts," Rand wrote. Indeed, "the parts, in this case, are of no use whatever, of no relevance to the matter of having an electric current" (6).

But in describing the reciprocal relationship between these two modes, Rand emphasized the primacy of learning. For Rand, "the first, basic principle (a kind of first sub-purpose) preceding every other specific purpose is the purpose of gaining knowledge." This principle stems from her conviction that *existence,* not consciousness is primary. Although learning and creativity cannot be bifurcated, Rand preserved their asymmetric internality. She explained: "The process of learning has as its purpose to acquire knowledge. The process of creation is the process of applying one's knowledge to whatever purpose one wishes to achieve" (4). Knowledge must always precede creation. Rand's literary inventions are not floating abstractions cut off from reality. Her fictional characters are intensely one-sided representations of principles and phenomena that *exist,* though not usually in pure, isolated form.

Both cognition and creation involve "*the rational process.*" In drawing abstractions from acquired knowledge, or in concretizing these abstractions back into specific concrete embodiments, Rand saw the same principle at work. Cognition and creation constitute a "completed cycle," which is characteristic not merely of literary method, but of all human activity. Rand suggested that human activity *as such,* is creative, for in all of their activities, people concretize their abstractions in the achievement of their distinctive purposes.

In each of her novels, Rand's characters are the kinds of one-sided concretes she wants them to be.[28] In their partiality, these characters interact as constituents of the organic unity that is the novel. The logic of the principles motivating each character unfolds through concrete actions, events, and circumstances, through interrelationships and conflicts that Rand created from the synthesis of her imagination.

But Rand realized that her fictional depiction of the truth of certain ideas was no substitute for fully articulated thought guiding efficacious social action. Since the artist creates and the responder experiences art in terms of sense of life, it is the sense of life that must be understood and, ultimately, influenced. Unlike the Russian Symbolists, Rand proposed a cultural revolution involving far more than just a Promethean aesthetic. Her cultural revolution would require philosophical articulation.

The Function of Philosophy

Much of this discussion has focused on the tacit dimensions of consciousness. For Rand, concept formation, emotions, sense of life, and even our habitual methods of thinking are based on subconscious integrations of which we are largely unaware. But such processes are not the only means by which the mind functions. Rand argued that there is an inescapable human need for philosophical articulation.

In order to appreciate the full meaning of Rand's theory, it is valuable to contrast her views with those of F. A. Hayek. Rand did not fully approve of Hayek's works. She believed that Hayek was not a pure enough advocate of capitalism, and that his understanding of reason was much too limited.[29] Given this antipathy toward Hayek's works, it is regrettable that Rand did not take his contributions more seriously, because she would have found that Hayek was critical of a particular conception of reason, rather than of the rational faculty per se. In many ways, both Hayek and Rand exhibit a similar disdain for traditional rationalism. I explore these parallels later in this chapter.

What needs to be discussed here is the distinction that Hayek and others have made between "knowing how" and "knowing that," between tacit and articulate epistemological dimensions. This is a distinction that Rand never made in these formal terms, but which is apparent in many aspects of her thought. Appropriating these concepts from the works of Gilbert Ryle and Michael Polanyi, Hayek argued:

> Men may "know how" to act, and the manner of their action may be correctly described by an articulated rule, without their explicitly "knowing that" the rule is such and such. Of course, once particular articulations of rules of conduct have become accepted, they will be the chief means of transmitting such rules; and the development of articulated and unarticulated rules will constantly interact.[30]

For Hayek, skills and habits, customs of thought and action are instances of our "knowing how" to do something without necessarily being aware of exactly what we are doing. Even as we articulate rules, we reduce and shift the tacit elements of our knowledge, but we can never entirely eliminate them. Polanyi ([1958] 1962) argued, for instance, that we may "remain ever unable to say all that we know" just as "we can never quite know what is implied in what we say" (56). Each of our statements may have an infinity of unspecifiable connotations (250).

Both Hayek and Polanyi maintained that we do not know why certain customs or taboos exist, except that some of them seem to embody an unarticulated "wisdom of the ages." Skills and crafts are passed on for generations without the craftspeople being able to articulate exactly what it is that they do. They may for instance, "know how" to use a tool, steer a boat, or play an instrument. But they may not be able to explain the actual creative process at work. They may not under-

stand the physical or physiological principles involved in the continued reproduction of the skill. Should they come to recognize and articulate such principles, their very definition of the principles incorporates linguistic rules that guide their thought, though they have not explicitly formulated or articulated these rules either. As Hayek observed, "The ability of small children to use language in accordance with rules of grammar and idiom of which they are wholly unaware" is a striking instance of this phenomenon. As with language, so with moral values, "Man has more often learnt to do the right thing without comprehending why it was the right thing, and he is still more often served by custom than by understanding" (Hayek 1981, 157).

Rand recognized that most people accepted rules of social conduct tacitly as if by cultural osmosis. But she rejected emphatically the claims of evolutionists like Hayek, who assessed the efficiency of moral codes by their relative ability to sustain the cultures that embraced them. Cultural longevity was an insufficient standard for evaluating the morality of a given rule of conduct.

In addition, Rand acknowledged that there is a significant tacit dimension in concept formation, subconscious integration, emotional response, sense of life, and psycho-epistemology. She recognized that skills and creativity involve important tacit elements. But Rand hated the phrase "know how," much as she rejected the view that human beings exhibit an "instinct of toolmaking" that could not be fully comprehended (Peikoff 1990-91T, lecture 12).

What must be understood is that Rand did not seek a synoptic identification of all that is tacit in the mind. It is true that every statement we utter carries with it certain implicit premises and conclusions of which we "may not necessarily be aware." To grasp the consequences of that which is merely implicit in our statements requires "a special, separate act of consciousness" (**"Appendix,"** 159). Indeed, to understand the meaning of an emotion, the essence of our sense of life, and the actual methods by which we think, we must train ourselves in the art of knowing. To say what we mean and mean what we say is an epistemological achievement in which we become aware of the implications of our statements by the clarity of our own thinking (Peikoff 1980T, lecture 1).

Like Habermas, Rand argued that a rational reconstruction is needed to render explicit the structure and elements of our "know-how." This does not mean that someone playing the piano must simultaneously grasp the physiological processes that make this playing possible. The pianist need not be omniscient before performing a sonata. But there are many areas where self-understanding is desirable. An awareness of one's own emotions, an appreciation of one's own values, is as essential as technical proficiency to one's creativity. The extent to which one automatizes and integrates this knowledge will deeply affect the efficacy of one's actions. Rand would have agreed with Polanyi, who stressed that the context determines the appropriate level of focus. Thus, a pianist may be aware of playing the piano without being *focally* aware of the movement of each finger. Beginners must focus on each successive strike of a different piano key, but their ability to automatize these motions raises them to a higher level of proficiency. For the mature pianist, the fingering process is largely automatized. Polanyi ([1958] 1962) explains: "If a pianist shifts his attention from the piece he is playing to the observation of what he is doing with his fingers while playing it, he gets confused and may have to stop. This happens generally if we switch our focal attention to particulars of which we had previously been aware only in their subsidiary role" (56).

Rand would not have disagreed with any of these observations. She recognized that consciousness is, by its nature, finite and limited. Indeed, as Peikoff (1991b, 125) suggests, no mind can hold in the "flash of a synoptic insight" all of the ideas and skills that are relevant to a particular task. And Branden ([1969] 1979) states further that no individual "can achieve exhaustive knowledge of the nature and laws of mental activity, merely by introspection" (9).

But to state that human beings are not omniscient or that they cannot gain complete knowledge of their own minds through introspection is *not* to suggest that certain epistemic elements are fundamentally inexpressible. What Rand opposed in Hayek and Polanyi was their tendency to view skills, ideas, and morals as ineffable.[31] Even though Hayek and Polanyi did not object to the post hoc attempt at a rational reconstruction of a tacit act, they believed, nevertheless, that there are certain epistemic components that cannot be articulated in principle.

By contrast, Rand viewed the tacit components of knowledge as articulable in principle, even if these components had yet to be fully understood. Rand did not believe that it was a requirement of human survival to articulate *every* tacit practice.[32] But for Rand, the articulation process was not only possible, but *essential,* especially in the realm of morality, because it enabled individuals not only to "do the right thing" but to know *why* it was the right thing to do. Philosophy, she maintained, holds the key to such articulation.

To live, human beings must act efficaciously. To act, they must choose. To choose, they must define a code of values. To define values, they must know their own natures and the nature of the world around them. No one can escape from this need to act, choose, value, and

know. Rand argued that for the individual the "only alternative is whether the philosophy guiding him is to be chosen by his mind or by chance."[33] The only alternative is whether to act on the basis of rational conviction and articulated understanding or on the basis of raw emotion and tacit sense of life. In Rand's view, an articulated philosophy is a necessity for efficacious living. It is "the foundation of science, the organizer of man's mind, the integrator of his knowledge, the programmer of his subconscious, the selector of his values."[34]

How could Rand make this statement when she had already acknowledged that most people are moved by tacit factors they have never fully grasped or articulated? If people begin by acting on subconsciously held metaphysical value-judgments, is the formation of explicit philosophical convictions nothing but an exercise in rationalizing the implicit? No. For Rand, articulation is *not* rationalization. Our core evaluations of ourselves, of others, and of the world may be wrong, but by not relying on the conclusions of our conscious minds, we are left at the mercy of inarticulate impulses that are largely the result of emotional and perceptual associations. Appropriate, efficacious action is based on the integration of the conscious and the subconscious. It may require alterations in our subconscious premises or, alternatively, in the explicit philosophical principles we have accepted. As Rand put it:

> You have no choice about the necessity to integrate your observations, your experiences, your knowledge into abstract ideas, i.e., into principles. . . . A philosophic system is an integrated view of existence. As a human being, you have no choice about the fact that you need a philosophy. Your only choice is whether you define your philosophy by a conscious, rational, disciplined process of thought and scrupulously logical deliberation—or let your subconscious accumulate a junk heap of unwarranted conclusions, false generalizations, undefined contradictions, undigested slogans, unidentified wishes, doubts and fears, thrown together by chance, but integrated by your subconscious into a kind of mongrel philosophy and fused into a single, solid weight: *self-doubt,* like a ball and chain in the place where your mind's wings should have grown.[35]
>
> ([**"Philosophy"**])

As people learn to define the fundamental principles of their actions, they begin to accept a philosophy by choice. Their conscious convictions program their subconscious minds, rather than being mere rationalizations for the values they have accepted tacitly. Those who are led by conscious thinking are more aware of their values and the premises of their emotions and are far more likely to lead integrated, efficacious, and empowering lives. This does not mean that every person must be an intellectual innovator. But it does mean that each individual must judge ideas critically and choose appropriately correct courses of action.[36] The nature of the conceptual faculty is such that we are not equipped to survive without some kind of comprehensive view of our existence. Whatever the level of our intelligence, we need to integrate our knowledge, project our actions into the future, and weigh the consequences contextually.

Rand argued that throughout human history this need was served by religion. The necessity for a comprehensive understanding of existence led even the most primitive peoples to embrace some form of religious belief.[37] And yet no form of faith or mystic revelation could take the place of rationally dictated principles. Although religion attempted to fulfill this need, its very methods and many of its teachings undercut the ability of people to live and act in a moral and rational manner.[38] Rand's rejection of religion is not a repudiation of ethics. It is an affirmation of a supremely secular need that people have to make their lives knowable, understandable, and efficacious. It is the nature of this "will to efficacy" which must be examined in greater depth.

The Will to Efficacy

In both her ethics and her epistemology, Rand preserved the centrality of reason because she saw it as an individual's chief means for achieving efficacy. Such efficacy is essential to human survival. But it is also internally related to an individual's self-concept. By preserving the ability to think and the will to understand, the individual achieves the self-esteem necessary for psychological and existential well-being (N. Branden [1969] 1979, 117).

In his early essays while he was associated with Rand, Nathaniel Branden explains that to the extent that individuals are committed to the goal of awareness, their mental operations will tend toward cognitive *efficacy.* To the extent that they fail in this commitment, they will achieve cognitive *in*efficacy (111-12). Efficacy is the conviction that one is capable of producing the desired effects in one's actions. A consistent ability to translate thought into action leads to a sense of cognitive control over one's life that is essential to living. Whereas Nietzsche spoke of the "will to power," Objectivism aims to legitimate and affirm what Branden has called, the *will to efficacy* (123). Psychoepistemologically, Rand's Objectivism reverses the Cartesian cogito. It begins with the fact of existence and defends the necessity of the conscious apprehension of both internal and external reality. In effect, Rand argued: "I am, therefore I will think" (B. Branden 1962T, lecture 10). Branden too emphasizes that we, as volitional beings, must engage in a consistent practice of awareness. We must grasp the cognitive roots of our emotions and the somatic-emotive contexts that condition our understanding. To the extent that our awareness is unobstructed, we will tend to achieve, in action, the goals that we have rationally sought and emotionally desired.

An unobstructed awareness is achieved through both a generalized or "metaphysical" efficacy and a specific or "particularized" efficacy. Metaphysical efficacy, Branden explains, pertains to a person's fundamental relationship to reality. The degree of a person's metaphysical efficacy is a reflection of the reality-oriented nature of that person's process of awareness. Particularized efficacy, by contrast, refers to a person's ability to achieve desired results through the mastery of specific practices. Such efficacy can only be affirmed through the expansion of knowledge and skills. The relationship between metaphysical and particularized efficacy is reciprocal.[39] Specific achievements will fuel a person's feeling of basic cognitive self-control, and such fundamental efficacy will promote the further mastery of practical skills.

Both Rand and Branden might be subject to the criticism that their belief in the human need for psycho-epistemological competence is specific to Western culture. Both of these thinkers recognize that "the individual" and "the self" are phenomena that have existed for thousands of years, though it was not until the development of industry and the rise of capitalism that such concepts were explicitly articulated. Yet, Rand would have agreed with Branden (1992) that the need for cognitive efficacy

> is not the product of a particular cultural "value bias." There is no society on earth, no society even conceivable, whose members do not face the challenges of fulfilling their needs—who do not face the challenges of appropriate adaptation to nature and to the world of human beings. The idea of efficacy in this fundamental sense (which includes competence in human relationships) is not a "Western artifact." . . . We delude ourselves if we imagine there is any culture or society in which we will not have to face the challenge of making ourselves appropriate to life.
>
> (19-20)

It might be said that the need for cognitive efficacy is a part of the identity of the human species. But the kinds of social practices that affect human efficacy *are* a reflection of the culture within which people develop and thrive. Culturally specific political institutions, the family, the school, and the workplace will encourage, reinforce, or, alternatively, thwart the development of the efficacious mind. Branden argues that in our society, there are dysfunctional families, dysfunctional schools, and dysfunctional organizations.[40] One might say that Rand's critique of statism, which I explore in Part 3, is an examination of a *dysfunctional* social formation that places institutional obstacles in the path of human efficacy, values, and life itself.

If "efficacy" is the ability to achieve the effects one desires, then "inefficacy" is its opposite. Does the Objectivist notion of efficacy imply that people are inefficacious if they are unable to actualize their intentions? Is Rand's understanding of efficacious action excessively rationalistic?

Rationalism and Empiricism

Since Rand's project stresses the efficacy and centrality of reason, several critics have placed her in the rationalist tradition.[41] In order to assess the validity of this criticism, it is essential first to explore the extent to which Rand separated herself from both rationalism and empiricism. In this regard, Rand reaffirmed the nondualistic intellectual tendencies of her Russian predecessors.[42]

For Rand, the genuinely philosophical mind is critically objective; it requires an active, passionate, engaged commitment to the pursuit of truth and knowledge as "of crucial, personal, *selfish* importance" to each human actor.[43] Rand's indictment of rationalism and empiricism is, in many ways, a component of her broader critique of "the *unphilosophical* mind." The unphilosophical mind is representative of contemporary, antirational culture. It consists of an "indiscriminate mixture of floating abstractions and momentary concretes, without the ability (or the need) to tie the first to reality, and the second to principles."[44] While Rand's repudiation of rationalism centers on its penchant for glorifying floating abstractions, her rejection of empiricism focuses on its essentially anti-conceptual character.

In Rand's view, the inability of post-Renaissance philosophy to solve the problem of universals ultimately led to the development of two schools of thought: "those who claimed that man obtains his knowledge of the world from concepts, which come from inside his head and are not derived from the perception of physical facts (the Rationalists)—and those who claimed that man obtains his knowledge from experience, which was held to mean: by direct perception of immediate facts, with no recourse to concepts (the Empiricists)."[45]

This division between rationalists and empiricists was a reflection of the mind-body dualism deeply ingrained in Western philosophy. Each tradition embodied a distortion; each was half-right and half-wrong. For Rand, knowledge was the product of a conceptual integration of the facts of reality. It could not be achieved by severing concepts from percepts, thought from reality, or abstractions from concretes.

Rand's analysis of rationalism and empiricism is not restricted to their post-Renaissance historical incarnations. Rand maintained that both rationalism and empiricism are employed as methods of inquiry by contemporary social scientists. Such modes of investigation must lead inevitably to a fragmentation of knowledge.

Both Rand and Peikoff argue that rationalism begins with a truth: human awareness is distinctively conceptual. But by cutting concepts from their perceptual roots, rationalists base their analyses on floating abstractions. From these dogmatic, acontextual premises, rationalists

typically engage in deduction as the means to knowledge. They claim that to achieve certainty, one must be fully comprehensive. Such a proposition, however, translates into a version of strict organicity; rationalists cannot explain anything without knowing everything. They exhibit an almost neurotic compulsiveness for systematization and order. Paradoxically, in their quest for totalistic knowledge, they are led toward more concrete-bound methods of inquiry. Rationalism is the basis of compartmentalization in modern social science. The desire for absolute specialization is the desire to know everything about minutiae. The tinier the fragment, the greater the potential for more "complete" knowledge of it. Each discipline becomes fractured from the totality. "Full" knowledge of the abstracted part is achieved, but the context and conditions from which the part emerges, is ignored. Rationalists are left with the study of disconnected concretes, mirroring their empiricist counterparts (Peikoff 1983T, lecture 7).

Peikoff emphasizes further that rationalism, by celebrating reason, embodies an abiding contempt for emotions. Rationalists equate feelings with subjectivism. They believe that feelings must be ruthlessly suppressed in the quest for objective knowledge.[46] As such, rationalism becomes a *rationalization* for emotional repression that can only distort the objectivity it seeks to achieve (Peikoff 1983T, lecture 10).

Empiricism, by contrast, begins not with floating rationalistic abstractions, but with the "hard" facts of reality. Empiricists adopt an inductive, observational method, which Rand agreed is the necessary foundation for all knowledge. But empiricists are suspicious of abstraction. They reject the rationalist-organicist tendency toward synthesis. They reject axioms and are frequently philosophical skeptics, atomists, subjectivists, and emotionalists. Their approach is at root anti-conceptual; it focuses on the perceptual, historical, statistical, or psychometric (lecture 8). Rand argued that the anti-conceptual mentality of the empiricist

> treats the first-level abstractions, the concepts of physical existents, as if they were percepts, and is unable to rise much further, unable to integrate new knowledge or to identify its own experience—a mentality that has not discovered the process of conceptualization in conscious terms, has not learned to adopt it as an active, continuous, self-initiated policy, and is left arrested on a concrete-bound level, dealing only with the given, with the concerns of the immediate moment, day or year, anxiously sensing an abyss of the unknowable on all sides.
>
> (***Introduction*** [***Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology***], 76)

Such a mentality is unable to make clear, conceptual distinctions between thought and emotion, cognition and evaluation, observation and imagination, essential and nonessential characteristics, object and subject, existence and consciousness.[47] It tends to "accept consequences while ignoring their causes." It regards as self-evident the complex products of thought, while not comprehending their preconditions and interrelations.[48]

In her journals in the 1950s, Rand speculated on the psycho-epistemological factors that might predispose an individual to what she later termed "anti-conceptual" methods. She initially characterized such anti-conceptualism as a form of "'memory-storing' epistemology." She maintained that someone who "thinks" by such methods does not store "*conceptual* conclusions and evaluations in his subconscious." Rather, he or she "stores *concrete memories* plus an emotional estimate" of their meaning. "Concrete events" and "automatic emotional reactions" coalesce to form a "montage" of "unanalyzed 'gestalts'" within the individual's mind. Such "thinking" short-circuits the individual's ability to fully perceive and understand reality:

> Since man needs a system of *symbols* to deal with the enormous complexity of his experiences, since he has to condense and simplify every new event by means of its *essentials,* since he cannot treat every new event as if it were an undifferentiated, unprecedented first in a baby's blank consciousness, but must integrate (or at least relate) it to the context of his past knowledge, this method substitutes an *emotion* for the *perception* and *selection* of an *essential.*[49]
>
> ([**"'Memory-storing' Epistemology"**])

In effect, Rand believed that this "emotional" approach to knowledge was the psycho-epistemological root of anti-conceptualist empiricism and its modern social science derivatives: pragmatist and positivist methodologies. Such approaches view facts as "single and discrete," unrelated to each other or to the context from which they arise (***New Intellectual*** [***For the New Intellectual***], 43-44). By tearing an idea from its context and treating it as "a self-sufficient, independent item," the anti-conceptual mentality fractures the connection between concept and context (Peikoff 1976T, lecture 5). It exhibits passivity with regard to the formation of concepts and fundamental principles. It focuses on the "empiric element in experience," and "treats abstractions as if they were *perceptual* concretes."[50]

Ultimately, empiricism, like rationalism, fuels the contemporary tendency toward compartmentalization. By collecting endless hard data within a narrowly defined subdiscipline, empiricists engage in specialization without integration (Peikoff 1983T, lecture 9). Thus the methods of empiricism and rationalism interpenetrate such that each school achieves similar analytical distortions (Peikoff 1980T, lecture 2). They make radical thinking and radical solutions impossible because they disconnect events from issues, social problems from their antecedent historical conditions, and political policies from their inexorable consequences.

Moreover, both rationalism and empiricism adhere to an infallibilist fallacy.[51] In their quest for dogmatic absolutes, the rationalists feign omniscience. In their battle against dogmatic absolutes, the empiricists claim that certainty is impossible. Both of these schools accept omniscience and infallibility as the standards for knowledge. The rationalists "pretend to have it," and the empiricists "bemoan their lack of it." But as Peikoff explains, the very notion of omniscience must be discarded. Knowledge and certainty are contextual. There is no validity to an absolute, acontextual truth.[52] As Rand explained it: "Man is neither infallible nor omniscient; if he were, a discipline such as epistemology—the theory of knowledge—would not be necessary nor possible: his knowledge would be automatic, unquestionable and total" (***Introduction,*** 78).

Rand was not the first philosopher to question the rationalist-empiricist dichotomy (Machan 1971, 104). Hollinger argues persuasively that Rand's critique bears some similarity to those of Nietzsche and Husserl.[53] Even Sartre (1963) laments "the separation of theory and practice which [has] resulted in transforming the latter into an empiricism without principles; the former into a pure, fixed knowledge" (22). But the most readily available parallels can be drawn between Rand and her Russian predecessors. As I suggested in Chapter 1, the rejection of rationalism and empiricism was central to Solovyov's philosophy. Solovyov argued that the empiricists, in their emphasis on sensualism, reduced the world to simple and subjective sensory data. Rationalists, by contrast, viewed the world strictly in terms of concepts and ideas. These traditions dichotomized experience and reason, practice and theory, and achieved distorted partiality. Although Solovyov embraced a mystic resolution, his antidualism greatly influenced the development of Russian philosophic thought. The most important twentieth-century Russian adherent to this approach was Lossky.

As we have seen, Lossky's first major work in epistemology rejected the rationalist-empiricist distinction. For Lossky, rationalism and empiricism led to the fragmentation of an indissoluble unity between subject and object. Both empiricism and rationalism dissolve into a form of subjectivism. In empiricism, sensory data is ultimately *subjective* sensory data. In rationalism, reality dissolves into the *subjective* processes of cognition. Lossky ([1906] 1919) hoped to achieve a coordination of subject and object by transcending the negative and absorbing the positive aspects of these false alternatives:

> In relation to the older ways of thought, our theory is chiefly characterised by the fact that it rejects their negations, but preserves their positive contentions, and seeks to supplement the latter by new truths. It would not, then, overthrow the old systems, but aim rather at bringing them to life again in a new form; it would free them from their old exclusiveness, and so prepare a way for their reconciliation and union.
>
> (402)

Though her resolution differed considerably from Lossky's "epistemological coordination," Rand reproduced the dialectical form of her teacher's critique. She recognized in empiricism and rationalism the same partiality that she saw in subjectivism and intrinsicism. In each of these interconnected polarities, there is onesidedness and distortion. The Objectivist alternative repudiates the common infallibilist premise of both its opponents, while reuniting previously bifurcated categories. Rand's Objectivism preserves the indissoluble connection between percepts *and* concepts, experience *and* logic, emotion *and* reason. It seeks to end the compartmentalization of the social sciences and the atomistic fragmentation of knowledge, aiming for an organic view of society that is both critical and revolutionary.

Rand and Hayek

Given Rand's antipathy to rationalism especially, it is extremely valuable to compare her views to those of Hayek. There are two reasons for this comparison: First, it helps to place Rand closer to the *non*rationalistic tradition of libertarian thought of which Hayek is a part, and second, it helps to elucidate the full implications of Rand's critique for the issue of human efficacy.

Though Rand and Hayek are opposed on many philosophical and social questions, they generally agree on the desirability of a free market. But Hayek's hostility toward central planning was an outgrowth of his opposition to "constructivist" rationalism. According to Hayek, state interventionism attempted to override the unintended consequences of human action by subordinating the spontaneous order of free exchange to an abstract social construction.

Norman Barry (1986, 15) notes correctly that in Rand's social theory, the Hayekian category of "unintended consequences" is virtually excluded. In my discussion of Rand's social ontology, I noted that Rand had formulated only two basic categories: the metaphysical and the man-made. The metaphysically given elements of objective reality could not be altered, whereas man-made objects, institutions, traditions, and rules of conduct should never be accepted uncritically. But within the category of the man-made, Rand did not distinguish between those objects, institutions, or procedures which people *intended* to make, and those which were the unintended consequences of their actions.

And yet, in recognizing that there are articulated and tacit dimensions of thought and action, Rand seems to have accepted the very distinction she did not explicitly endorse. For Rand, emotion is one such tacit compo-

nent. No one *intends* to feel a certain emotion. A specific emotional response develops within the mind as an unintended by-product of habitual subconscious integrations. Traditions and customs are also the long-term by-products and manifestations of habitual practices.

Rand never belabored the issue of unintended consequences because it appeared somewhat obvious to her. As Binswanger argues: "Even at a very primitive state of knowledge one can observe that one's actions have two very different kinds of consequences; those which are *intended* and those which one [*sic*] did not." The intended consequences are those which one foresees or anticipates. The unintended results of human action are accidental by-products which were not the basis of the agent's motivation.[54]

Like Marx, Rand believed that an obsessive emphasis on unintended consequences came dangerously close to their reification as transhistorical constants.[55] For Rand, every human institution and practice is ultimately capable of change. This is completely consistent with her view that emotions, habitual methods of awareness, and sense of life are equally open to modification—despite their resilience. However, Rand was not naive; she recognized that for most individuals the process of change was extremely difficult.

Nevertheless, by not focusing extensively on unintended consequences, Rand neglected an aspect of social inquiry that was central to Hayek's worldview. Hayek was influenced by the writings of both classical conservatives, like Burke, and the classical liberals of the Scottish Enlightenment. These thinkers opposed the notion that one can step outside the historical process and redesign the civil order from its first elements through the "infinite" powers of reason. Hayek inherited this legacy and propelled it to a deeper epistemological level.[56] As he put it:

> The picture of man as a being who, thanks to his reason, can rise above the values of his civilization, in order to judge it from the outside or from a higher point of view, is an illusion. It simply must be understood that reason itself is part of civilization. All we can ever do is to confront one part with the other parts. Even this process leads to incessant movement, which may in the very long course of time change the whole. But sudden complete reconstruction of the whole is not possible at any stage of the process, because we must always use the material that is available, and which itself is the integrated product of a process of evolution.[57]

Since we are unable to get a synoptic view as impersonal, detached social actors, we have it in our power to "tinker with parts of a given whole" but never to "entirely redesign it" (Hayek 1976, 25).

It is within the larger totality—the cultural context—that Hayek situated the mind. He maintained that the mind is inscribed in a cultural setting. It is wrong to apply one-way causal notions to either. The mind and culture developed concurrently. They are internally related. "It is probably no more justified to claim that thinking man created his culture," argued Hayek (1981), "than that culture created his reason" (155). Nonetheless, many thinkers have represented Reason ("with a capital R")[58] as "the capping stone" of evolution that enabled human beings to design culture. But this concept of reason is highly abstract and *rationalistic*. It obscures the interpersonal, social process in which the reasoning individual both absorbs and transmits cultural values. Hayek stated, in almost Marxian fashion, that social theory must start "from [those] whose whole nature and character is determined by their existence in society" (6). Moreover, social interaction creates effects which are greater than any individual mind "can ever fully comprehend" (7).

Hayek's central objection to rationalism is that it obscures the internal relationship of mind and culture. The rationalist conception of reason sees the rational faculty as external to the culture from which it springs. This is an inherently dualistic approach to social reality. Hayek argued that the Cartesian rationalists, in particular, promoted this arrogant interpretation of reason's power. He called these rationalist thinkers "naive" or "constructivistic."[59] They assume that institutions which benefit humanity have "in the past—and ought in the future to be invented in clear awareness of the desirable effects they produce" (85). Constructivism presumes that human beings can design (or "construct") social institutions as if they were outside the context of history, using the infinite powers of Reason. Constructivism is the "fatal conceit" endangering the future of wealth, morals and peace.[60] It is "an abuse of reason based on a misconception of its powers, and in the end leads to a destruction of that free interplay of many minds on which the growth of reason nourishes itself."[61]

Hayek contrasted constructivist rationalism with a legitimate alternative, which he called, "critical rationalism" (94). He believed that "reason properly used" is a faculty that acknowledges its own limited potential. Hayek criticized socialists precisely for their constructivist attempts to invert the structure of social order. Socialism embodies a mechanistic approach to human affairs; it sees social order as a form of arrangement and control. The central planners believe that they can gain access to all those facts which may facilitate social directioning (Hayek 1988, 66). But central planning requires knowledge of relative scarcities, information that cannot be disconnected from the context—the dynamic market process—that generates it.

By contrast, Hayek saw capitalism as an extended order of human cooperation, an emergent, spontaneous product of social interaction. What makes the market so unappealing to the socialist is that most of its institutions

are not the product of explicit design. Socialists reject the "anarchy" of capitalism because it appears both "unreasonable" and "unscientific" (ibid.).

For Hayek, there are aspects of social reality which are not subject to direct control. There are many unintended consequences that arise from the process of social interaction. These consequences are not a sign of human inefficacy; they are a natural, social product. Constructivism requires people to step outside the social and historical process, grasping its modus operandi through a synoptic identification of the totality. This attempt at omniscience is an abuse of reason, according to Hayek, because it fails to grasp the actual structure of knowledge, which includes both articulate and inarticulate components.

The constructivist rationalists embrace what Hayek (1973) describes as a "synoptic delusion" (14). A synoptic delusion represents a false belief that one can consciously design a new society as if one had possession of holistic knowledge. Holistic knowledge involves grasping the complex interrelations of the society which are necessarily constituted by both articulate and tacit social practices. Such knowledge ultimately requires omniscience. Omniscience, in turn, implies human infallibility. This infallibility would even have to extend to knowledge of the structure and processes of one's own mind. Hayek stated: "There will always be some rules governing a mind which that mind in its then prevailing state cannot communicate, and that, if it ever were to acquire the capacity of communicating these rules, this would presuppose that it had acquired further higher rules which make the communication of the former possible but which themselves will still be incommunicable."[62] Hayek believed that the idea of a mind explaining itself is a logical contradiction. Its impossibility should help us curb our intellectual hubris.[63] Human fallibility and the inherent contextual limits of knowledge are then the strongest factors militating against a fully imposed or designed rationalist order. The attempted imposition of order dislocates the very processes that make order possible.

Clearly, there are enormous differences in the Randian and Hayekian perspectives. But it is possible to see some significant parallels between them. On an immediate level, Rand would have agreed with Hayek that one cannot explain the rules of mental operation by a process of infinite regress. Moreover, as Binswanger (1989T, lecture 1) argues, we cannot use our own minds to step outside of and judge those very minds. There is no such thing as a "supraconscious" that enables one to "stand above" oneself.

But far more important, Rand and her intellectual allies would have agreed with Hayek's assessment of the historical roots of constructivist rationalism. Hayek argued that just as the Western concept of rationality is the product of both Enlightenment thought and market capitalism, so constructivism is an inappropriate extension of the Enlightenment faith in Reason.[64] Though Rand celebrated the Enlightenment's contribution to the secular defense of liberty, she also argued that the Enlightenment perpetuated a fallacious view of reason.[65]

This critique of Enlightenment rationalism was not peculiar to Rand or Hayek. Thinkers in the hermeneutic and Frankfurt school traditions have all exhibited a similar tendency to criticize the "instrumentalist" view of reason at the heart of Enlightenment thought. John Caputo (1988) explains that these thinkers aimed to redefine reason

> in a more reasonable way and to rescue it from the Enlightenment distortion of rationality. For the Enlightenment subjected reason to the impossible ideal of unconditioned rationality and absolute indubitability, and then, in the hope of meeting such impossible standards, turned reason over to the rule of a rigorous method and systematicity. . . . [W]e have learned to stop blaming reason for the failure to meet these standards and to start blaming the Enlightenment.
>
> (5)

This is precisely the crux of both Rand's and Hayek's critique. The failure of rationalism was not a failure of reason. By ascribing to human beings the attributes of an omniscient deity, and then condemning human reason for not fulfilling this ideal, rationalists attack the genuine legitimacy of human cognition. Rand argued that this destructive pattern is reproduced by the advocates of altruism, who erect an impossible, self-abnegating standard of morality and then indict humanity for not being able to live up to it.

Whereas Hayek concentrated on the social and cultural context of the capacity to reason, Rand focused on the identity of the rational faculty. By ascribing to human beings an infallibility that is, in fact, unattainable, rationalists disconnect the will to efficacy from any realistic understanding of its meaning.

But the will to efficacy is not simply a capacity to produce a desired effect. It is the conviction that one is competent *in principle* to think and act. Although such efficacy is expressed in particularized skills, it is not confined to skill. Nathaniel Branden ([1969] 1979) writes: "It is applicable to, and expressible in, every form of rational endeavor" (128). But efficacy is not a purely cerebral experience. Rand's expansive concept of consciousness translates into an equally expansive notion of what it means to be efficacious. Genuine efficacy results from a fully integrated constellation of reason, emotions, values, actions, conscious convictions, and subconscious sense of life, with no dichotomy presumed between any of the constituent elements. In

Chapter 9 I explore the Objectivist conviction that labor—productive work—is central to the achievement of such efficacy because it "is the distinctively *human* mode of action and survival" (129). Productive work expands our particularized efficacy, our replication and knowledge of skills, our understanding of tasks, our ability to grasp principles of action.

Rand's recognition of these interrelationships provides a basis for comprehending the nature and guiding purpose of the constructivist rationalism that both she and Hayek condemned. *Such rationalism fractures the constituent elements of consciousness, and abstracts reason from its integrated context.* Rationalism attempts to satisfy the human need for efficacy by a one-sided emphasis on Reason, not human reason, but an abstract, narrow, disconnected, and unintegrated conception of reason.

Rationalism emerges from an error of abstraction, an isolated focus on the apparently limitless capacity of the human rational faculty. In proposing an all-powerful Reason with no limits, rationalists project a Reason with no identity. The rationalist sees the capacity to know as infinite, in the sense that the knowledge of one fact presupposes that a person can attain knowledge of a second fact, a third fact, etc. This knowledge series can be (potentially) extended to infinity. But Rand observed that infinity is only a mathematical or methodological concept; it is not valid as a concept pertaining to human epistemological potential.[66] People are neither immortal nor omniscient. At any point in time, a person's actual capacity and knowledge is both finite and contextual. Rationalism collapses the distinction between potential knowledge and actuality. It deifies the human ability to know and embraces a concept of reason that is epistemologically invalid.

We think within a definite structure. Our senses perceive real things and processes in the universe, and our rational faculty apprehends their structural and logical interrelationships. We achieve the cognitive efficacy that is requisite to survival by acting in accordance with the laws of logic to produce the desired effects. All of natural science is an attempt to systematize our knowledge of consistent and predictable relationships. Science charts certain courses of action initiated by particular entities with distinctive natures, producing specific effects. But as Hayek emphasized, and as Rand would not have denied, one person's attempt to generate a desired effect is tempered by the reality of other people who are engaging in similar actions. The result is often a product that no one intended. To a rationalist, this is incompatible with our need for predictability and certainty. The rationalist wishes to create a social laboratory in which people are made to act with the same predictability as the law of gravity.

Such rationalism is rooted in a deep psycho-epistemological fear. As Branden emphasizes, people can develop a fear of the risks of acting on their own fallible judgments. This is a fear not of action per se, but of action in a universe in which success is not always guaranteed.[67] There are two diametrically opposed ways in which we can respond to this fact of fallibility. There are innumerable variations in behavior between these two extremes. We can accept the possibility that we might make mistakes. We can accept that there will be many unintended consequences to our actions. Or we can revolt against this fact. We might seek to escape from the responsibility of thinking and acting (N. Branden 1980, 100). Alternatively, as Packer (1986T) suggests, we might be neurotically obsessed with planning and structuring every minute detail of our existences in a compulsive and misbegotten effort to conquer life's uncertainties. If we do that, we have replaced our will to efficacy with an illusory quest for omniscience.

In Rand's view, the rationalist assault on reason has "two interacting aspects" that must be examined. The primary aspect is individual since, ultimately, it is the individual who must choose "to think or not to think." Hence, any doctrine that attacks the mind's efficacy must be judged by its effects on our willingness or ability to raise the focus of our awareness. Rationalism subverts an individual's psycho-epistemology because it proposes a standard that no one can live up to. Those who accept this doctrine live in perpetual guilt for their alleged failures.

But Rand recognized that there was a second interacting aspect that needed to be explored. This "contributory cause" is always social. The "social environment can offer incentives or impediments; it can make the exercise of one's rational faculty easier or harder; it can encourage thinking and penalize evasion or vice versa." For Rand, contemporary statist society "is ruled by evasion—by entrenched, institutionalized evasion—while reason is an outcast and almost an outlaw."[68]

What makes Rand's analysis so powerful is her ability to trace the effects of a philosophic doctrine on many different levels of generality. For Rand, rationalism was but one particular form of epistemological perversion with negative consequences for values, culture, education, politics, and human relationships.

Notes

1. See *Romantic Manifesto* for these more specific applications. For Rand's discussion of music, which employs Helmholz's theories, see Rand (April-June 1971), "Art and cognition," in *Romantic Manifesto*, 50-71, and Blumenthal and Blumenthal 1974T. Though not considered as a com-

ponent of Rand's aesthetics, a discussion of the nature of beauty is provided by Rand in Peikoff 1976T, Lecture 11 and 1991b, 448. The best critical presentation of Rand's aesthetics is provided by Torres and Kamhi (January 1991-September 1992), "Ayn Rand's philosophy of art: A critical introduction," in Torres and Kamhi 1982-94; (August 1993), "Reader's forum: on 'Ayn Rand's philosophy of art,'" in Torres and Kamhi 1982-94, 4-6. This series is forthcoming as a book. See Torres and Kamhi 1996.

2. Rand (April 1965), "The psycho-epistemology of art," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 16-17.

3. Compare Hayek (1948), who similarly argues that our efficacy is largely a result of how well we perform certain activities without thinking about them.

4. Rand (May-July 1969), "What is romanticism?" in *Romantic Manifesto,* 101.

5. Rand (April-June 1971), "Art and cognition," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 46-47, 73.

6. Rand 1958T, Lectures 1 and 7. On the nature of "creative thinking," see N. Branden [1969] 1979, 81; Smith 1993; and Rand (1940), "The simplest thing in the world: A short story," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 173-85. In this stream-of-consciousness narrative, Rand depicts the inner workings of the mind of Henry Dorn, an author, in his attempt to write a story. Dorn's subconscious integrations direct his conscious thoughts with lightning-like speed.

7. Peikoff 1991b, 446. Though Lossky was not an aesthetician, it was he who taught Aristotle to Rand. Lossky himself argued that each art work is an organic unity in which all elements are "in harmony with, and exist for, one another." Lossky [1917] 1928, 48, 160. Tolstoy was another Russian writer who championed the "completeness, oneness, the inseparable unity of form and contents" in a work of art. Tolstoi [1899] 1913, 96.

8. Rand, in N. Branden (1962), "The literary method of Ayn Rand," in Branden and Branden 1962, 135-40. Cox (1993) examines the extensive integration that Rand achieved in *The Fountainhead.*

9. I use the word "responder" to include viewers (for the visual arts), readers (for the literary arts), and listeners (for music). Thanks to Torres and Kamhi for this suggestion.

10. Rand (March 1966), "Art and sense of life," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 35.

11. In her concept of "style," Rand merged two tacit dimensions: "sense of life" and "psycho-epistemology." As she put it: "Style conveys what may be called a 'psycho-epistemological sense of life,' i.e., an expression of that level of mental functioning on which the artist feels most at home." *Romantic Manifesto,* 42.

12. Rand (March 1966), "Art and sense of life," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 35.

13. Rand (April 1965), "The psycho-epistemology of art," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 24.

14. Rand (April-June 1971), "Art and cognition," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 63.

15. For raising this issue, thanks to Saint-Andre (5 January 1993C).

16. Rand (January 1965), "Bootleg romanticism," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 129-30.

17. Rand (October-November 1963), "The goal of my writing," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 169.

18. See Cox 1986, in which Cox relates Rand's aesthetic theories to her own literary craft.

19. Rand (May-July 1969), "What is romanticism?" in *Romantic Manifesto,* 99.

20. Rand (October-November 1963), "The goal of my writing," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 167. Among Russian writers, Yuri Carlovich Olesha has also been identified as both a Romantic and a Realist. Guerney 1960, 375.

21. In *Anthem* Rand experimented with futuristic themes. *Atlas Shrugged* also contains elements of science fiction and fantasy.

22. Rosenthal 1975, 15-18, and (1986), "Introduction," in Rosenthal 1986, 46-47.

23. Rand (April 1965), "The psycho-epistemology of art," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 22-23. In this context, Rand argued: "The greater a work of art, the more profoundly universal its theme." Thus, while her own fictional works have a strong propaganda element, they also incorporate themes that transcend a particular time or place.

24. Rosenthal (1986), "Introduction," in Rosenthal 1986, 36-37; Steele 1988, 41. For additional parallels between the "God-builders" and Rand, see Chapter 13.

25. Rand quoted in N. Branden (1962), "The literary method of Ayn Rand," in Branden and Branden 1962, 97.

26. Rand (1943-44), "From Ayn Rand's unpublished writings: A speech to architects," in Binswanger 6.6.13. [*The Objectivist Forum,* Binswanger, Harry, ed.]

27. Rand (4 May 1946), "From Ayn Rand's notes for *Atlas Shrugged,*" in Schwartz 6.1.5. [*The Intellectual Activist*]

28. Rand (4 May 1946), quoted in Peikoff 1991a, xiv.

29. Rand 1961T. Childs (1993, 46) observed correctly that Rand's writings do not make a single reference to and that the N.B.I. has never carried a single book written by Hayek.

30. Hayek (1968), "The confusion of language in political thought," in Hayek [1978] 1985, 81. The notion of a "tacit" dimension does not originate with Ryle, Polanyi, or Hayek. Livingston (1991, 174) argues that Aristotle's discussion of the "topic or commonplace is roughly the same as Hayek's tacit dimension or tradition."

31. There are many other differences between Rand and Hayek. For example, Rand would have disagreed with Hayek's endorsement of Popper's falsifiability criterion. Gray (1984, 12, 19-21) notes, however, that Hayek's acceptance of a "falsificationist methodology" comes with "massive qualification."

32. In this regard, N. Branden (1994, 288) has suggested a closer affinity with the Hayekian-Polanyian perspective. He argues that every person has a tendency to accept certain cultural beliefs that are never "the subject of explicit awareness. . . . It is not possible for anyone, even the most independent, to make *every* premise conscious or to subject *every* premise to critical scrutiny." Each of us is a being of our time and place. "None of us can entirely escape the influence of our social environment." I discuss these issues further in Chapters 11 and 13.

33. Rand (February 1966), "Philosophy and sense of life," in *Romantic Manifesto,* 30.

34. Rand (October 1975), "From the horse's mouth," in *Philosophy,* 99. Even a thorough "materialist" such as Engels argued for the primacy of philosophy over science: "Natural scientists may adopt whatever attitude they please, they will still be under the domination of philosophy. It is only a question whether they want to be dominated by a bad, fashionable philosophy or by a form of theoretical thought which rests on acquaintance with the history of thought and its achievements." Engels 1882, in Selsam and Martel 1963, 171.

35. Rand (6 March 1974), "Philosophy: Who needs it," in *Philosophy,* 6.

36. Rand (3 January 1972), "'What can one do?'" in *Philosophy,* 246.

37. Rand (June 1970), "The chickens' homecoming," in *New Left,* 107.

38. Smith (1979) provides a Rand-influenced defense of atheism.

39. N. Branden [1969] 1979, 127-28. On reciprocal causation, see N. Branden 1987, 41, and 1983b, 60, and Peikoff 1974T, Lecture 9.

40. N. Branden 1994 is Branden's most detailed treatment to date of the impact of cultural institutions on the development of self-esteem and efficacy.

41. See Emmons 1971, and Barry 1983 and 1986.

42. Aside from some references to rationalism and empiricism in *For the New Intellectual,* Rand did not write much on the subject. The material herein discussed is primarily from Peikoff's lectures, which derive from Rand's teachings and from the oral Objectivist tradition.

43. Rand (28 January-11 February 1974), "Philosophical detection," in *Philosophy,* 19.

44. Rand (25 February 1974), "Ideas v. goods," in *Ayn Rand Letter* 3:296.

45. *New Intellectual,* 39. Though there are *many* different meanings attached to rationalism and empiricism, Rand does not make any distinction between "concept-empiricism" and "judgment-empiricism," or "concept-rationalism" and "judgment-rationalism." "Concept-empiricism" sees all concepts as arising out of experience, whereas "concept-rationalism" denies this. "Judgment-empiricism" views all propositions as either verifiable-in-principle or analytic, whereas "judgment-rationalism" views propositions as synthetic and a priori. Thanks to Hospers (17 July 1993C ["C" used throughout to indicate correspondence and personal communication]) for these qualifications. Rand would have probably rejected each of these incarnations.

46. Peikoff 1983T, Lecture 7. This course is described by Peikoff as a product of his own struggle with methodological rationalism. Peikoff (1983T, Lectures 1, 3, and 12) argues that Objectivism cannot be filtered through the dualism of mind and body without causing interpretive distortions. He offers useful guidelines against "rationalist Objectivism."

47. *Introduction,* 76; Rand (30 July 1973), "Perry Mason finally loses," in *Ayn Rand Letter,* 225.

48. Rand (28 January-11 February 1974), "Philosophical detection," in *Philosophy,* 15.

49. Rand (January 1994), "'Memory-storing' epistemology," in Schwartz 8.1.3.

50. Rand (7-21 May 1973), "The missing link," in *Philosophy,* 45-46.

51. Smith (1979, 133) uses this phrase.

52. Peikoff 1976T, Lecture 6. For Objectivism's contextual view of "certainty," see Peikoff 1991b, 171-82.

53. Hollinger (1984), "Ayn Rand's epistemology in historical perspective," in Den Uyl and Rasmussen 1984, 42, 49.

54. Binswanger 1990, 30-32. Both Rand and Branden argued that human rationality required responsibility—a willingness to accept the intended *and* unintended consequences of one's actions. They were fond of the old Spanish proverb, "God said: 'Take what you want and pay for it.'" Rand (July 1970), "Causality versus duty," in *Philosophy,* 122; N. Branden 1980, 188; N. Branden and E. D. Branden 1983, 148.

55. On the Marxian view, see Flacks 1982, 16. Rand's resolution actually lies somewhere between the optimism of Marx and the conservatism of Hayek. Marx believed that capitalism perpetuated and was constituted by unintended consequences. To focus purely on unintended consequences reified characteristics that were historically specific to capitalism. He envisioned a future society in which people conquered the unintended consequences of their actions. Although Rand did not exhibit such intellectual hubris, her resolution required the emergence of a degree of cognitive efficacy hitherto unseen in human history.

56. Sciabarra 1988a; 1995.

57. Hayek (1970), "The errors of constructivism," in Hayek [1978] 1985, 20.

58. Hayek (1946), "Individualism: True and false," in Hayek 1948, 15.

59. In Hayek (1965), "Kinds of rationalism," in Hayek [1967] 1980, 85, he cites Gladstone as the first person to use the term "constructivism" to describe the "engineering type of mind."

60. Hayek 1981, 129; 1988.

61. Hayek (1965), "Kinds of rationalism," in Hayek [1967] 1980, 93.

62. Hayek (1962), "Rules, perception and intelligibility," in Hayek [1967] 1980, 62.

63. Hayek (1964), "The theory of complex phenomena," in Hayek [1967] 1980, 39.

64. Lavoie (1982, 21-22) has a provocative insight when he writes: "Both Marx and Mises pointed out that rationality as we know it is itself a product of the emergence of market relations." The belief that rationality is internal to capitalism is one held by thinkers as diverse as Marx, Mises, Weber, and Rand. I further explore Rand's conception in Chapters 9 and 10.

65. See her *New Intellectual.* Also see Peikoff 1982. Rand added that it was this fallacious view of pure reason that Kant criticized in a "straw man" argument that undermined a proper understanding of the rational faculty. Rand (17 February 1960), "Faith and force: The destroyers of the modern world," in *Philosophy,* 77-78; Rand 1972T.

66. "Appendix," 148-49. On the concept of infinity, compare Aristotle, *Physics* 3.4.204a34-5.206a7, in Aristotle 1941, 260-64.

67. N. Branden [1969] 1979, 175. Compare Shaffer 1976, 14.

68. Rand (April-May 1966), "Our cultural value-deprivation," in *Voice of Reason,* 102.

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[*In the following essay, Olster argues that Rand's "depiction of sexuality" and her "gender politics" in her fiction, particularly* Atlas Shrugged, *suggest that her ideals of "industrial American society" and "laissez-faire capitalism" are repressive and brutal when it comes to female sexuality, and that the "American society she hailed as providing deliverance" is no different from "those European dictatorships she despised for having ended in enslavement."*]

"I can't explain what it feels like, I can't catch hold of it—and that's part of the terror," says Cherryl Brooks in ***Atlas Shrugged*** when trying to describe to her sister-in-law the fear that makes her feel she has "no place to run." Searching desperately for words adequate to her needs, she continues: "It's as if the whole world were suddenly destroyed, but not by an explosion—an explosion is something hard and solid—but destroyed by . . . by some horrible kind of softening . . . and that would be the end of the world, not fire and brimstone, but goo" (826). Neither a pretty prospect nor one portrayed with especial eloquence, the threat finally drives its speaker to run into a river to drown herself. Yet articulating its horrors before her death turns an otherwise minor character, a dime store salesgirl among industrialist gods and goddesses, into a spokesperson for the underlying sense of anomie that inspired Ayn Rand's 1957 novel. And describing those horrors in terms almost identical to those employed by more memorable figures of the decade turns Rand herself into more than an idiosyncratic *Isolato* upsetting celebrations of consensus with a solitary jeremiad on the country's ills. Renouncing a world that might end with a whimper instead of a bang hardly liberates Cherryl in the way that recognizing "that spiral business" as "that progress goo" does for the invisible man when he rejects both communist historicism and Christian millennialism in Ralph Ellison's novel (509). The "No" that serves as her final shriek does not reverberate nearly as thunderously as Leslie Fiedler's own battle cry for the decade. But portraying cultural anomie as a consequence of ideological stalemate does align Rand with authors at all points on America's political spectrum as commentators on the same cultural phenomenon.

According to Rand, who defined culture as "a complex battlefield of different ideas and influences," America in the fifties simply had no culture, just a "grotesque spectacle of such attributes as militant uncertainty, crusading cynicism, dogmatic agnosticism, boastful self-abasement and self-righteous depravity" (***Philosophy*** 251, 72). In particular, America in the fifties had no political ideas capable of constituting a culture, what with conservatism and liberalism so indistinguishable their terms "could be stretched to mean all things to all men" (***Capitalism*** 178). And believing that a "majority without an ideology is a helpless mob, to be taken over by anyone" (***Capitalism*** 138), Rand saw America of this period in a position of extreme peril, rapidly succumbing to collectivism and primed for all those political corollaries she grouped under the heading of statism.

With the Objectivist movement she championed, Rand sought to fill that ideological void. "We are *radicals for capitalism,*" she wrote in a piece entitled, appropriately enough, **"Call Your Issues"** (1). Yet feeling that capitalism "never had a philosophical base" and presuming that "America has never had an *original* culture" with which to portray the country's "profound difference from all other countries in history," she set out to provide those missing foundations in her novels (***Capitalism*** 30; ***Philosophy*** 256). In ***Atlas Shrugged,*** the work intended as the culmination of a lifetime's efforts, she defined that uniqueness concretely: "To the glory of mankind, there was, for the first and only time in history, a *country of money*. . . . For the first time, . . . there appeared the real maker of wealth, the greatest worker, the highest type of human being—the self-made man—the American industrialist" (391).

As Richard Pells has pointed out, such searches for the source of America's uniqueness and the uniqueness of the national character formed very much a part of fifties discourse, particularly after the failure of leftist politics abroad kept intellectuals scrambling to differentiate between the United States and Europe, thereby "'proving' that the history of America had always been a conspicuous exception to the Marxist prophecy" (181). Unfortunately for Rand, representing those distinguishing traits in fiction exposed the fault line of an ideological alternative that, in theory, was meant to supply America with "the only social system based on the recognition of individual rights and, therefore, the only system that bans force from social relationships" (***Capitalism*** 38). Nowhere is the fissure in that fault line more clearly illustrated than in the treatment of sexual relationships that permeates ***Atlas Shrugged.*** Evidenced by scenes in which conquest of superior women by superior men is presented as a form of commodities acquisition and in which feminine submission is predicated upon sexual submissiveness, Rand's depiction of sexuality reveals the laissez-faire capitalism she championed to be grounded in the same use of brute force she abhorred. When viewed with respect to the productive work she posited as the basis of her ideal society, the contrast between Rand's economic theories and her gender politics reveals that the productive work she prescribed for each individual was limited to certain individual types. When extrapolated beyond the personal, it shows the industrial American society she hailed as providing deliverance to be all too similar to those European dictatorships she despised for having ended in enslavement. "Who is John Galt?" goes the novel's most famous refrain. Just your average industrialist *Übermensch.*

America's Moral Crisis: The Topicality of *Atlas Shrugged*

Rand was not the only one in the fifties who discerned extreme anxiety underlying the era that Henry Luce saw ushering in the American Century. Just how widespread the sentiments she attributed to her shopgirl were can be seen when looking at the remarks of those intellectuals who comprised the very different audience that responded to *Partisan Review*'s 1952 symposium "Our Country and Our Culture." United in finding "little

direct criticism of society in current writing, but no enthusiasm either," as one writer stated (578), respondents refuted, almost to a person, the patriotic contentions about a shift from alienation to celebration that formed the editors' opening statement. Equally united in seeing intellectuals "adjusting themselves to circumstances [rather] than really affirming any point of view" (439), respondents also agreed that even that adjustment should be construed as "largely a product of the will, a forced march of intellect" (579). If many did cite the demise of the communist ideal and subsequent threat of the Soviet Union as the particular political circumstances from which much of that reconciliation stemmed, they embraced the alternative America seemed to offer only to the degree that any lesser evil could be advocated ("Between the inadequate democracy of the capitalist world and the total repression of the Stalinist world there is the difference between life, however afflicted, and death" [577], "What has happened is not that American culture has become better in that time, but the world much worse" [291]). And if any indicated what political belief had been substituted for the one renounced, they identified the affiliation; more often than not, by negation ("anticommunist," "anti-Stalinist"), recognizing full well the limited degree of support that any stance so defined could command. William Phillips thus understood that making anti-Stalinism "the sole content of one's thinking, that is, an end in itself," was "simply another way of losing one's identity, for even alliances on the grounds of expediency cannot be substituted for one's own ideas or feelings" (589). Philip Rahv went even further in condemning those ex-Marxists who returned to the fold as "trying to turn anti-Stalinism into something which it can never be: a total outlook on life, no less, or even a philosophy of history" (307).

In conceiving of ideology as an all-encompassing philosophical system that embraced more than just political and social structures, Rahv's remarks suggest the limitations of designating this period in America, as Daniel Bell did, a mere "end of ideology," for the "exhaustion of political ideas in the fifties" that the subtitle of Bell's 1960 book cites is inadequate to describe "the desperate makeshift of our time," as Mark Schorer put it (317), that those living through the period experienced. It was not until Delmore Schwartz's response appeared in the third issue devoted to the symposium that the degree of desperation underlying so many of the earlier remarks became fully exposed. "It is in the light of this darkness that the will to conformism, which is now the chief prevailing fashion among intellectuals, reveals its true nature," Schwartz wrote in a concluding entry that could not have been more effectively placed had it been the work of a major dramatist. "It is a flight from the flux, chaos and uncertainty of the present, a forced and false affirmation of stability in the face of immense and continually mounting instability" (594). Having thus pierced through the mood of emotional impasse that characterized "Our Country and Our Culture" earlier, he transformed the fifties from a decade of complacency into a period of reconceptualization: "The more we reflect upon the changes of past and present, the clearer it becomes that the present, whatever else it may be, is essentially an intermediate period, a period of both *after* and *before,* a time of waiting in darkness before what may be a new beginning and morning, or a catastrophic degradation of civilization" (594).

Such a period of intermediacy, in fact, constitutes the entire temporal setting of Rand's novel in which the men (mainly) and women of ability withdraw themselves from the world of everyday affairs to a Rocky Mountain Shangri-la, there to await the destruction of the United States that its current practices make inevitable. John Galt, the charismatic leader who spirits them away from businesses on the brink of failure, opts for such removal long before the action of the novel commences, when he refuses to surrender control of a motor he has invented to his employer and literally quits the Twentieth Century, as the factory for which he has worked is named. The drama to which the majority of the novel is devoted is the growing realization of its other heroic industrialists (oil oligarch Ellis Wyatt, copper king Francisco d'Anconia, metal magnate Hank Rearden, and, most of all, railroad vice president Dagny Taggart) that a society driven by altruistic need and a country run by middle managers and influence peddlers cannot be redeemed by individual effort but only rejected, that, in short, a country veering toward financial bankruptcy is also veering toward moral bankruptcy. Dagny, the one woman in the group and the character conceived by Rand as herself "with any possible flaws eliminated" (B. Branden 225), arrives at this conclusion through romances with the three most impressive industrialist men.

In choosing withdrawal rather than engagement as their response, Rand's characters select a path that was hardly unique in the postwar period. In withholding the products of their minds from society and adhering to a "moratorium on brains" (531), they virtually duplicate the stance of "negativism" that Dwight Macdonald proposed when commending those British and American scientists who refused to work on the atom bomb for fear of the destructive purposes to which generals and politicians might put the product of their efforts (*Memoirs* 179). Likewise, in opting for physical removal as a means of ensuring their nonparticipation, they chose a mode of action quite popular among protagonists struggling to define an ideological stance for themselves during the postwar period: Saul Bellow's dangling man retires to a room (1944), Norman Mailer's Barbary Shore occupants retreat to a boarding house (1951), Ralph Ellison's invisible man jumps down a manhole (1952), and Joseph Heller's Yossarian tries to

circumvent catch-22 by rowing to Sweden, a country socialist in a way that the Soviet Union is not (1961).

The distinctiveness of the choice made by Rand's characters, however, stems from the circumstances that inspire the withdrawal they undertake. Unlike those coeval characters created by former leftists, whose flights originate in reaction against political violations of human rights (as exemplified by a hypnotist's act at a party of comrades for Bellow, the Nazi-Soviet Pact for Mailer, the Brotherhood for Ellison, and the U.S. military for Heller), Rand's refugees flee political infringements of economic rights. Only when their businesses are about to fall under government control do Rand's industrialists vanish, thus avoiding that final surrendering that is prefigured in the book by a steady stream of regulatory legislation (Anti-dog-eat-dog Rule, Equalization of Opportunity Bill, Preservation of Livelihood Law, Fair Share Law, Public Stability Law) meant to limit ownership of the means of production, abolish private trademarks, and regularize both the output of all competitors and the purchasing of all consumers.

In fact, for all the book's mention of foreign nations becoming socialized People's States one by one—first Mexico, then Norway, France, England, Portugal, and Turkey, finally Argentina and Chile—rarely does Rand depict the abrogation of civil liberties she repeatedly emphasized in her public harangues against statism. ("Try to imagine what it is like if you are in constant terror from morning till night and at night you are waiting for the doorbell to ring, where you are afraid of anything and everybody, living in a country where human life is nothing, less than nothing, and you know it," she charged the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947 [**"Testimony" ["Testimony of Miss Ayn Rand"]** 90].) Rather, changes of political systems gain significance only to the extent that changes in governing structures affect industrial structures (as occurs with the nationalization of the railroads and public ownership of the mines in Mexico). It is not until the very end of the novel that the human consequences in which such economic practices can end are fully realized. Even then, the realization is portrayed only indirectly, personified in the figure of Cuffy Meigs, the Washington representative in charge of standardizing the country's cardiovascular system of railroads, who, in military tunic and leather leggings, goosesteps his way to a coup d'état capital (imaginatively dubbed "Meigsville"), an appropriation of property he justifies by patting the gun slung at his hip.

The American Political Tradition: Money is the Root of all Goodness

When it came to pointing the finger of blame for such deplorable conditions, Rand was careful to distance herself from all political movements of her time, not just the fascism, socialism, and communism she considered different from each other only in degree (the difference between communism and socialism being, in her view, the difference between murder and suicide). Having defined democracy with respect to "unlimited majority rule," she included democracy as another form of collectivism that denied individual rights (*Lexicon* 121). Similarly, despite the friendly testimony she provided the House Un-American Activities Committee and her outrage that later defamation of the term "McCarthyism" prevented further investigations into communist penetration from being undertaken (***Capitalism*** 176), she declared herself not to be an admirer of the Wisconsin senator, found most of the committee members "intellectually out of their depth, and motivated by a desire for headlines," and finally granted the hearings on the movie industry at which she appeared to have been a "very dubious undertaking" (B. Branden 201, 202).

Her strongest condemnation she reserved for those conservatives with whom she had grown steadily disaffected since her campaigning for Wendell Willkie in 1940 and whose name in print she typically surrounded with quotation marks. Lambasting them in particular for failing to admit that "the *American* way of life" they championed *was* capitalism, offended by the infringement of individual rights she saw their favoring censorship and military conscription illustrating, she condemned them as "futile, impotent, and, culturally, dead," as the title of her piece **"Conservatism: An Obituary"** indicates (***Capitalism*** 194). As imaginative compensation, she offered the figure of John Galt, whose resuscitating promises of economic renewal she portrayed as offering nothing less than national regeneration. "We will open the gates of our city to those who deserve to enter," proclaims the messianic leader when describing the society that those who emerge from self-imposed exile will eventually initiate. "With the sign of the dollar as our symbol—the sign of free trade and free minds—we will move to reclaim the country once more from the impotent savages who never discovered its nature, its meaning, its splendor" (991-92).

Likened, in alphabetical order, to Atlas, Moses, and Prometheus specifically and resembling all Greek gods generically, alternately rumored to have discovered both Atlantis and the fountain of youth, Galt is perhaps the most overdetermined character in history. He also is the American Adam par excellence, "self-made in every sense, out of nowhere, penniless, parentless, tie-less" (731), so overendowed with Americanist resonance as to cross gender lines when depicted carrying his laborer's lantern like the Statue of Liberty (893). Fittingly, the reclamation he heralds is presented as a supreme act of patriotism—with all echoes to persons living or dead fully intended. "A country's political system is based on its code of morality. We will rebuild America's sys-

tem on the moral premise which had been its foundation, . . . the premise that man is an end in himself, not the means to the ends of others, that man's life, his freedom, his happiness are *his* by inalienable right" (985). The questions that remain to be considered, though, are just how "inalienable" those individual rights attributed to America's political system were and just what practical consequences derived from presuming the country's moral supremacy to rest upon their foundation. For that it is necessary to turn to Rand's rereading of America's origins as justifying the country's supremacy among nations.

Rand had few doubts about the supremacy of the American system she chose to have Galt rebuild, a certainty that, at least in part, is attributable to the fact that the lives of Objectivism's two chief proponents of the fifties presented almost stereotypical scenarios of American success: the Russian Alice Rosenbaum arrives in New York's harbor with a typewriter and a new name and lives to do the lecture circuit wearing a gold brooch in the shape of a dollar sign as her emblem; the Canadian Nathan Blumenthal rechristens himself Nathaniel Branden (much like an earlier Nathan [Weinstein] who emerged as Nathanael West), founds an institute to bear his name, and within seven years is offering lecture courses in over eighty cities, not to mention one on board a Polaris submarine in the mid-Atlantic. Nor did Rand have any doubts about just what role in the reconstruction of the country's political system she should assign herself. Viewing the political philosophy of the country as "buried under decades of statist misrepresentations on one side and empty lip-service on the other," she deemed it her mission to rescue America's political tradition from "the shameful barnacles now hiding it" and returned to the revolutionary period to facilitate her task of salvage (***Lexicon*** [***The Ayn Rand Lexicon***] 172).

Yet far from being alone in her return to the past to rediscover America's virtues, Rand typified the approach of many during the fifties who, as evidenced by scholars such as Daniel Boorstin, Perry Miller, and David Potter, returned to the past to chart a history of ongoing tradition and harmony in place of that history of conflict and division that was bequeathed to them by immediate predecessors such as Turner and Beard (Pells 148-49). Equally representative was Rand in emphasizing uniqueness as well as continuity when returning to the revolutionary period to revive the nation's inceptive principles ("the United States of America is the greatest, the noblest and, in its original founding principles, the *only* moral country in the history of the world" [***Philosophy*** 12], "the only country in history born, not of chance and blind tribal warfare, but as a rational product of man's mind" [717]), particularly as the principles of its founders distinguished the country from older nations in Europe. As indicated by the list of works published in the fifties that Richard Pells includes in his own work (Henry Nash Smith's *The Virgin Land* [1950], Perry Miller's second volume of *The New England Mind* [1954], R. W. B. Lewis's *The American Adam* [1955], John William Ward's *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* [1955], Marvin Meyer's *The Jacksonian Persuasion* [1957]), investigations into the qualities that defined the nation's character were quite prominent during this time, especially among those in the growing American Studies movement (149-50).

To the well-known adages concerning the origins of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in the eighteenth-century period she favored for her investigative return, however, Rand added a few contributions of her own. "If you ask me to name the proudest distinction of Americans, I would choose—because it contains all the others—the fact that they were the people who created the phrase 'to *make* money'" (391), says ***Atlas Shrugged***'s copper king, Francisco Domingo Carlos Andres Sebastián d'Anconia, in the book's famous "Money Is the Root of All Evil" speech. Rand later elaborates on the point after one of the employees that Dagny Taggart has lost to Galt's withdrawal explains to her the origin of the dollar sign in the initials of the United States. "It was the only country in history where wealth was not acquired by looting, but by production, not by force, but by trade," Owen Kellogg informs the vice president of Taggart Transcontinental. "The only country whose money was the symbol of man's right to his own mind, to his work, to his life, to his happiness, to himself" (637). Having thus employed a rhetoric of distinction to establish the country's greatness, Kellogg invokes a similar mode of discourse to define its present ignominy: "The United States is the only country in history that has ever used its own monogram as a symbol of depravity" (637).

Speaking in strict historical terms, Rand's assumption was wrong—the American dollar sign was taken from the Spanish milled dollar. Speaking in sociological terms, however, her presumption very accurately reflected her own time in that its "reacharg[ing] tradition for its own uses," to quote W. T. Lhamon Jr., typified the kind of "collective kinking" of cultural forms that defined the "oppositional culture" Lhamon has found prevailing during the decade (29, 28). Indeed, viewed within the Americanist context in which so many during the fifties were working, the seemingly hair-brained monologues about money even *gain* a certain validity, especially when the word "money" is replaced by its eighteenth-century analogue "property," for it was the preservation of property that lay at the heart of the political theory adopted (and adapted) by the country's founders.

Rand admitted the development of that political theory to have been a long struggle that preceded the actual formation of the United States, "stretching from Aristo-

tle to John Locke to the Founding Fathers" (***Capitalism*** 138), Locke's contribution in particular being a view of property ownership that defined property with respect to labor instead of land. Consistent with such a preference for manufacture over nature, none of the heroic industrialists who parades through ***Atlas Shrugged*** has much appreciation for unblemished landscapes—the rolling curves of Wisconsin's hills make Hank Rearden wish for a billboard (266). All, in fact, make their names by vanquishing nature, extracting raw materials from the environment in order to found their industrial empires: oil in the case of Ellis Wyatt, ore for Francisco d'Anconia and Hank Rearden, and, most astoundingly, static energy from the atmosphere to be converted into kinetic power by John Galt. The one exception, Dagny's grandfather Nat Taggart, immortalized in a statue in the terminal that bears his name and exemplifying for Rand the industrialist at his nineteenth-century pinnacle, does not make his fortune from the ground but gains it by razing the earth in order to build a transcontinental railroad.

According to Louis Hartz, whose *Liberal Tradition in America* provided "An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution," as the subtitle of his 1955 work makes clear, Locke's domination of American political thought "as no thinker anywhere dominates the political thought of a nation" constituted "a massive national cliche" (140); because such a narrow intellectual "tyranny" proved especially ineffectual in the fifties when exported to compete with the challenge of communism abroad, what was needed, in Hartz's view, was "nothing less than a new level of consciousness, a transcending of irrational Lockianism, in which an understanding of self and an understanding of others go hand in hand" (8, 308). Rand, in contrast, only expanded Locke's purview and redefined each industrialist's right to accrue wealth as a natural right of every man: "Just as man can't exist without his body, so no rights can exist without the right to translate one's right into reality . . . which means: the right to property" (986).

Nowhere is the latitude Rand gave that redefined right more apparent than in her invocation of the Declaration of Independence's right to pursue happiness (the word Jefferson substituted for Locke's "property") as a sanction for rampant individualism. In ***The Fountainhead***'s climactic courtroom scene, for instance, Howard Roark specifically targets "man's right to the pursuit of happiness" as *the* basis upon which America was founded when defending his demolition of a public housing project—both for the Keynesian welfare state it symbolized and the taint that conforming to its structural dictates would have left on his architectural talents (684). In ***Atlas Shrugged,*** the characters justify both personal and professional aggrandizement upon the same basis, as befits that work intended to be a more "social" novel than its predecessor, in which, as Rand's preparatory notes indicate, "the personal is necessary only to the extent needed to make the [social] relationships clear" (ii).

Hank Rearden thus recognizes "happiness" as "the greatest agent of purification" early in the book (38); he just cannot use it to sanction his extramarital affair with Dagny Taggart ("I hid my happiness as a shameful secret" [529]). Only after he hears Dagny announce (over the radio no less) having been his mistress with the simple statement, "I wanted him, I had him, I was happy" (792), can he accept, in personal terms, his pursuit of happiness with her as an inalienable right. Moreover, justifying personal dealings with Dagny as a pursuit of happiness enables Rearden to justify professional dealings with her with respect to the same sanction. Like Dagny's earlier relationship with Francisco d'Anconia, which her own mother considers "an international industrial cartel" instead of a romance (101), the affair with Rearden is more merger than marriage: it is his new metal that enables her to build the tracks for the John Galt Line that saves her railroad from bankruptcy at the beginning of the book; the forced closing of the line later impels his wife to rush to Dagny and gloat over "what was, in effect, the funeral of your child by my husband" (495).

With the justification of the personal relationship as a pursuit of happiness reverberating doubly in this manner, it takes little imagination to see Rand's rationale eventuating in the code of self-interest that those industrialists who secede from the world take as their creed: "I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine" (680). Even less does it take to figure out the very limited form of government that those who subscribe to such a code and seek to protect the products of their labor would find tolerable. Locke confined its legislative powers to "never hav[ing] a Power to take to themselves the whole or any part of the Subjects *Property,* without their own consent" (407). Rand went even further and restricted its function to one legitimate purpose: "to protect man's rights, which means: to protect him from physical violence" (987).

Romantic Realism: Property, Power, and (Sexual) Possession

In theory, of course, any person was entitled to such protection, just as, in theory, any person was entitled to pursue wealth. In fact, however, the operative word for Rand was "man's," a possessive that, in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** signals all sorts of subjects for possession in addition to Locke's property. To the extent that "man's rights" reflects Rand's belief that the "essence of femininity" was "hero-worship—the desire to look up to man," not for any special virtue any singular man may possess, but

for the "*metaphysical* concept of masculinity" that, no doubt, came attached to a Y chromosome (***Lexicon*** 166), the phrase signifies more than a convention of grammar used to delineate that which belongs to humankind in general. It indicates quite clearly the unequal power dynamic that Rand ascribed to relations between men and women. Yet to the extent that Rand's adherence to the tenets of "Romantic Realism," as she termed her aesthetics, subordinated individualized characterization to "*concretized abstraction[s]*" of moral ideals (***Romantic*** [***The Romantic Manifesto***] 142), the unequal power dynamic that constituted Rand's delineation of appropriate gender roles also provides a revealing look at Rand's true feelings about power itself. The result in ***Atlas Shrugged*** is a sanctioning of physical violence that shifts according to the gender of the doer and the nature of the deed being performed.

The most revealing evidence of that selective sanctioning is provided by Rand's portraits of sexual possession, all of which are presented as acts of physical combat between men and women, with women forced into positions of subservience and loving every minute of it. D'Anconia slaps Dagny, and she feels pleasure from both the pain in her cheek and the taste of blood in the corner of her mouth (100); d'Anconia grabs Dagny, and she knows "that he left nothing possible to her except the thing she wanted most—to submit" (107). Rearden jerks her head back and plants his lips on hers "as if he were inflicting a wound," throws her inside his room to let her know "he needed no sign of consent or resistance" (as indeed he does not, since Dagny realizes she is "only a tool for the satisfaction of his desire"), and leaves her bruised "after hours of a violence which they could not name" in which "she had been ready to accept anything he had wished to do" (240, 241). By the time it comes for her to submit to Galt, the man for whom all Dagny's earlier encounters have been practice runs and who, true to Randian form, throws her onto a pile of burlap sandbags in order to have his way, it is no wonder that Dagny feels herself reduced to "not a person any longer, only a sensation" (888). After all the previous Olympic trials through which Rand has put her, what new words of self-abnegation can possibly remain?

As anyone acquainted with ***The Fountainhead*** will recognize, the violence of physical passion is familiar Rand territory—sex with Howard Roark entails pinned wrists, purple bruises, and clenched teeth for Dominique Francon, which this self-described "utterly frigid woman" accepts in order to experience "the kind of rapture she had wanted" (181, 218). (To those who protested the act as rape, Rand's rejoinder was to call it rape by engraved invitation. To those who read Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham's treatise *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* in the fifties, it would have confirmed the authors' "psychosocial rule" that "the more educated a woman is, the greater chance there is of sexual disorder, more or less severe" [qtd. in Halberstam 590].) And certainly, Dagny's being put in her proverbial place enables Rand to extricate herself from the violations of gender roles with which a fifties heroine endowed with much too angular a physique and too many professional skills (running a railroad, flying a plane) leaves her. It is, after all, not just the villains in the book who see Dagny as "a symptom of the illness of our century . . . a woman who runs a railroad, instead of practicing the beautiful craft of the handloom and bearing children" (135). Eddie Willers, her right-hand man, cannot think of her as a woman or even imagine anyone else having the audacity to do so (609), and Dagny reinforces such a view by introducing herself as the man in the Taggart family to her new sister-in-law (374).

Because of the analogical rhetoric adopted throughout ***Atlas Shrugged,*** however, the violence of sexuality has ramifications that extend beyond issues of appropriate social roles. "A man's sexual choice is the result and the sum of his fundamental convictions," d'Anconia tells Rearden. "Tell me what a man finds sexually attractive and I will tell you his entire philosophy of life" (460). In Rearden's case, this kind of deduction proves extremely easy to ascertain. What Rearden finds attractive, specifically, is a "railroad executive who was a woman he owned," whom he looks at "with the glance of a property appraisal" (266), and who, in turn, conceives of their sexual coupling as giving him a "safer hold" on her "than on any other property you own" and grants him permission to "dispose of me as you please" (244).

Dagny, moreover, is not just any piece of property, but a luxury item. "I'd give up anything I've ever had in my life, except my being a . . . luxury object of your amusement," she tells Rearden, who has just draped over her shoulders a blue fox cape (352). To Galt, quite simply, she is a "symbol of luxury" (724). And luxury items were precisely what characterized the American feeding frenzy of the fifties that Walt Rostow called the stage of "high mass consumption" (Chafe 112), in which purchasing power was portrayed as a question of mind over matter (or, more to the point, money). Poverty, according to Henry Luce, was simply the "habit of thinking poorly"; businessmen were told to convince the buyer that "'the hedonistic approach to his life is a moral, not an immoral one'"; and Ben Franklin was resurrected by advertisers who quoted him as having endorsed spending as each citizen's contribution to the health of the nation's economy: "'Is not the hope of being one day able to purchase and enjoy luxuries a great spur to labor and industry?'" (qtd. in Miller and Nowak 118, 119).

In Rand's view, luxury spending was the logical consequence of living in a country distinguished from other nations by its commitment to making money. In the

1947 testimony about the movie industry that she provided Congress, for example, outrage at *Song of Russia*'s portrait of a Russia without human terror is matched by outrage at its portrait of a Russia saturated with consumer goods and oozing affluence: "big, prosperous-looking, clean buildings" and "clean and prosperous-looking" streets; satin skirts, crystal chandeliers, privately owned radios, and long-distance telephones; a restaurant "with a menu such as never existed in Russia at all" and a "luxurious dance" in a ballroom that is "an exaggeration even for this country" (**"Testimony"** 83-84, 85-86). In ***Atlas Shrugged,*** significantly, the moment Galt views Dagny as a "symbol of luxury" is the same moment he wants to immortalize her "short hair and the imperious profile of an American woman" in a statue dedicated to "the meaning of an American railroad" (724).

Yet Rand never recognized the human consequences that portraying physical want as commodities acquisition in literature could come to signify. When Dagny gets her wish and is disposed of as nearly every heroic male in the book pleases, she functions—much like the gold standard—as a medium of exchange among them, each of whom, with exemplary grace, cedes her to the other in a paradigm of free trade practices. "Take it," d'Anconia says to Galt when toasting the union of his friend and his former lover. "You've earned it" (753). But if her initial possession and subsequent maintenance are achieved through acts of violence, and if property rights and human rights were viewed by Rand as inextricable, then we are dealing with more than Rand's abstract theories of femininity being a function of male hero-worship and more than fifties questions of whether women should stay in the house or go to work. We are dealing with the abridgement of those human rights that Rand found distinguishing America's founding principles.

Dagny is not just reduced to being a suburban housewife, checking shirts for missing buttons and getting food on the table in time for dinner, when she stays in Galt's house while recuperating from injuries sustained in flying her plane into his Rocky Mountains retreat uninvited. She is turned into his servant—willingly opting to address him as "sir" and lowering her eyes at the appropriate moment when receiving a five-dollar advance on her wages (707). With Rearden, who tosses jewels at her instead of coins, she simply becomes a slave, as is illustrated after Rearden's private possession of Dagny gives him the license to make public claim of his property. He tells her to wear the particular piece of jewelry that gives a woman "the most feminine of all aspects: the look of being chained" (133), a bracelet made from Rearden Metal that even his indolent wife perceives as "the chain by which he holds us all in bondage" (48). Dagny, in turn, accepts her new agent of subjugation accordingly: "In the moment when the clasp clicked shut under his fingers, she bent her head down to them and kissed his hand" (266).

For individualized characters to turn physical want into commodities acquisition is bad enough—much the same occurs in ***The Fountainhead*** to Dominique Francon, who literally is exchanged by one of her (three) husbands for an architectural building contract. But when enacted by characters conceived as exemplary moral abstractions, in a novel intended to demonstrate the superiority of America's principles over those of Europe's statist nations, severe contradictions result. When the policies of Rand's American redeemers end in practices indistinguishable from those totalitarian ones she had been excoriating for years, the distinction between the one country whose economic and political system allegedly did not involve coercion or conquest and all those statist countries whose did is proven to be completely bogus. When the redemption of the world is at stake, even Dagny, who "would have hesitated to fire at an animal," has no difficulty pumping a bullet into the heart of a guard who denies her access to the room in which Galt is being held prisoner (1066).

Recognizing that the "aristocracy of talents" that Rand proposed just masked her desire for a dictatorship in the making, Whittaker Chambers entitled his review of her book "Big Sister Is Watching You" and ended with a chilling summation: "From almost any page of ***Atlas Shrugged,*** a voice can be heard, from painful necessity, commanding: 'To a gas chamber—go!'" (596). What he failed to recognize was how much Rand's yearnings reflected nativist rather than foreign influences, specifically, how much her desire for some kind of empowered elite aligned her with those eighteenth-century Founding Fathers she loved to invoke, all of whom believed in some form of governing aristocracy as a stabilizing force in society, one that would prevent it from being torn apart by the fractious mob. As ***The Fountainhead***'s references to "the mob" and "the crowd," "the taste of the people" and "the will of the majority" indicate (409, 414, 533), Rand had nothing but contempt for the multitude that constituted the general public. Her marketing genius in ***Atlas Shrugged*** was to pitch an aristocracy of money and a billboard coat of arms to those who were most on the rise at the same time that their contributions to the phenomenon of mass culture were consistently being derided by intellectuals. If Dwight Macdonald deemed the middle class a "collective monstrosity" of "passive consumers" held together by a "flaccid Middlebrow Culture that threatens to engulf everything in its spreading ooze" ("Theory" 70, 60, 63-64), Rand, in contrast, hailed the middle class as "a nation's productive—and moral, and intellectual top" (***Lexicon*** 297). If Clement Greenberg mourned a shrinking avant-garde as boding ill for "the survival in the near future of culture in general," Rand reversed the emphasis and declared, "The upper classes

are merely a nation's past; the middle class is its future" (***Lexicon*** 297).

The catch, of course, was that word *intellectual.* Just as accolades about available affluence hid the fact that the richest 1 percent of the population held one-third of the nation's wealth by the end of the fifties and 45 percent of the country's families had less than two hundred dollars in liquid assets, that the richest 0.5 percent of the upper classes actually increased its holdings over the course of the decade from 19.3 percent in 1949 to 25 percent in 1956 (Chafe 143-44), not for a minute did Rand feel that all men (and all women) were created equal in those cognitive skills capable of propelling them to the top of Galt's "intellectual ladder" from which they could trade brains for dollars (989). As she later would admit when describing **"The Age of Envy,"** "nature does not endow all men with equal beauty or equal intelligence," and anyone who advocated an egalitarian social structure was only proposing the establishment of "an inverted social pyramid, with a new aristocracy on top—*the aristocracy of non-value*" (***New Left*** 165).

Ultimately, the aristocracy of intellect Rand proposed allowed for only one aristocrat, herself, who required absolute fealty of her followers. Rand justified such total dedication on the basis of what she gave in return—not just an ideology but a complete philosophy that provided "a comprehensive view of life" and, even more, "the realization that a comprehensive view of existence is to be reached by man's *mind*" (***New Left*** 107, 108). The testimony of those who stayed with her as long as they did—despite the purges that fractured the Objectivist movement bit by bit and finally ended with the Great Schism between Rand and Nathaniel Branden in 1968—suggests that the people to whom she preached concurred with her own estimation. "She was a philosophical system-builder—during a century when system-builders were out of fashion and almost impossible to find," said Branden when recalling the moral quagmire in which those coming of age in the fifties felt they were sinking. "And today, reflecting back on those years, it is clear to me that what matters is not whether her vision was correct in all respects—I know now that it wasn't—but that she *had* a vision, a highly developed one, that promised comprehensiveness, intelligibility, and clarity" (244). One cannot help being more impressed, though, by the memory of another Objectivist that Branden cites immediately before his own mellifluous elegy, a recollection that suggests just how disadvantageous—indeed, dangerous—the intellectual rate of exchange that Rand offered her readers really was. "Look how much she had to offer! Look at how much I was learning!" the anonymous former disciple is quoted as having said. "If she got a little berserk now and again, *so what?*" (244). So what, indeed.

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Karen Michalson (essay date 1999)

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[*In the following essay, Michalson contends that Dagny Taggart, from Rand's* Atlas Shrugged, *is "perhaps the only female character" in Western literature "who possesses all of the traits of the traditional epic hero," and stresses how feminist critics have misunderstood the often-noted disconnect in her character—namely, her willingness to be sexually abused and dominated by her male counterparts in the novel—because they have failed to appreciate Rand's "radical" brand of feminism in the figure.*]

In the beginning, all heroines were fictional and all heroines were real. That is why there were no heroines. The "feminine" dallied in the shady realm of near-history in the form of snake goddesses and fertility figures and flower-bedecked priestesses and semihistorical Cretan queens.

And despite the material evidence for queens and high priestesses and goddesses, there were no hierarchies. And men (there were men too, although of a different sort than we have today) lived in peaceful partnership with women, and there was no competition, and nobody excelled or made more money than anybody else, so nobody had to feel bad about themselves. Besides, there were rigid bureaucracies to collect taxes and force everybody into the joyful equality that all right-thinking members of these societies advocated anyway. And women (and maybe men too) made great discoveries in metallurgy (but only for ornamentation and not for destructive weapons) and collectively invented agriculture. And as an added bonus everyone had indoor plumbing and there was plenty of leisure time to carve pregnant women in stone.

And then, around 4200 B.C.E. or 2000 B.C.E. or something-thousand B.C.E., Eastern invaders with male gods and bronze weapons destroyed the goddess cultures and instituted warrior cultures of male dominance, competition, and conquest.

And hence Western civilization.

Which is why Western culture never developed a paradigm for heroic women, and why heroes in the Western literary tradition are all men.

This is not my myth. It is only my retelling of a myth handed down by Riane Eisler, Merlin Stone, and other feminist writers.[1] I am not interested in whether this story is archaeologically or historically valid. I am interested in fiction making, in the uses of this story qua story, and in appropriating it for writing about Ayn Rand's supremely heroic creation, Dagny Taggart, the protagonist of ***Atlas Shrugged.***

I find this feminist creation myth a useful starting place for writing about what, for many feminists, is a troubling disconnect in the character of Dagny Taggart, a disconnect that appears sharply to focus an apparent misogynic strain in Rand's writings by demonstrating Rand's seeming inability to recognize even the strongest women as self-sufficient individuals.

Dagny Taggart is arguably one of the strongest heroes in Western literature. She is one of the very few female characters, perhaps the only female character, in important, influential Western literature who possesses all of the traits of the traditional epic hero. These traits include, of course, the familiar catalogue of being a figure of national or cultural importance, of embodying the

culture's highest values, of having adventures in a worldwide setting, of performing and achieving superhuman feats, and of performing actions and undergoing experiences that the gods take an active interest in.[2]

Dagny is an epic hero in an archetypal simplicity that is as stunning as the functional simplicity of her unadorned physical appearance and her uncluttered apartment. She is a figure of national importance, both because she is a nationally known vice-president of a transcontinental railroad and because the fate of the nation depends on her ability to get essential goods transported to vital areas as the country's infrastructure breaks down. She embodies and lives by the highest values in the world of Rand's novel: individualism, purpose, self-actualization. Her adventures take place in a setting of epic proportion, the United States. In fact, since Rand envisions a United States that is undergoing a period of severe economic and social decline, Dagny's actions also occur against a setting of mythic and apocalyptic proportions, that of a great civilization in its death throes. Her actions and achievements are superhuman in the sense that most of her colleagues are in awe—or a little afraid—of her ability to keep a railroad running despite shortages of supplies and manpower that cripple other large businesses. The gods take an active part in her actions in the sense that many of the other heroes of this world, the producers whose achievements make the difference between worldwide savagery and civilization, whose minds produce the seeming miracles of creating new metals and designing new bridges to move tons of supplies through arcs of empty space, work for and against her success.

However, Dagny seems more than willing to assume traditional subservient female roles in relation to the three heroic male characters who become her lovers: Francisco d'Anconia, Henry (Hank) Rearden, and John Galt. To please Galt, Dagny, the brilliant independent mind that runs a transcontinental railroad, cooks and cleans house like any Harriet-style 1950s housewife. Why did Rand endow her glorious female hero with weak knees for stronger men? Does this character trait, this seeming disconnect, compromise Dagny's status as a hero?

If the above description of the epic hero sounds simplistic and familiar, that is precisely the point of this essay. When Rand created Dagny, she was consciously drawing on the epic-hero archetype, in all of its historical simplicity. She was writing ***Atlas Shrugged*** in the 1950s, when archetypal and comparative studies of Western epic-heroic literature were current. I am not implying that Rand consciously or deliberately drew from those academic studies. She might have, but she didn't need to. There is plenty of biographical and literary evidence that her heroic characters were influenced by the creations of Victor Hugo and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and that she held a lifelong fascination with Hollywood motion pictures that often depicted heroic characters.[3] I am stating that at the time Rand wrote ***Atlas Shrugged,*** the traditional literary definition of heroism was essentially simplistic and unproblematic. Everyone from professional intellectuals to eager schoolkids lining up for Saturday matinees knew a heroic character on seeing one, and few publicly questioned or challenged or attempted to deconstruct the "politics of meaning" embedded in the archetype.

Except, perhaps, Rand herself, which is why, I would argue, she has been so misunderstood by feminists. But more on that later.

Here's my myth.

In the beginning, all heroines were fictional and all heroines were real. That is why there were no heroines.

The Great Mother Herself does not mean. She is. There is a dark swollen presence existing at the fringes of history in faceless stone carvings of female figures. The Great Mother is a name we give to this "feminine" presence, but it is our name, not Hers. She is a presence, not a persona.

The Great Mother was life and death, and so did not differentiate between them, for the intimacy Her cultures had with death meant that birth and fertility were valued beyond all things. The Great Mother was nature in all Her chthonic violence, the worship of exploding fecundity being a violent response to the violence of sudden, inexplicable, nonexistence. As Camille Paglia ([1990] 1991, 43) reminds us: "The goddess' animal fecundity was cruelly dramatized in ritual. Her devotees practiced castration, breast-amputation, self-flagellation or slashing, and dismemberment of beasts." Mother Earth was womb and tomb. Life and death are one in ritual. The Mother was All.

That is why, in the beginning, the Great Mother had no stories and no adventures and committed no heroic deeds. There were no differentiated character aspects of Herself for poets to make tales about. None that survived into the Western literary tradition, anyway. We can and do make tales at a distance out of silent artifacts, but they are only our Western way of invading and colonizing the prehistoric material for our own uses. Literature is an act of invasion, an immortal weapon of the invader cultures. The oldest written epic, *Gilgamesh,* is essentially about the separation of life and death, for Gilgamesh, the male hero, is out to conquer death by gaining eternal life. He can't. The unknown poets who wrote and compiled the known versions of the world's first literary epic created a fictional world in which immortality is unobtainable, although for Gilgamesh, the world's first literary hero, a lifelong

youth, that is, a life undifferentiated by age and change, is still an option, albeit a fading one. Gilgamesh learns of this possibility from Utnapishtim, an immortal human who lives in a region separated from the rest of the world and who clearly belongs to a past age in which birth and death are undifferentiated. The Flood that destroyed humanity was the same Goddess womb from which Utnapishtim was born into immortality, living forever in a realm outside the world that the hero, Gilgamesh, must cross a river of death to find.

The dirty joke is that a serpent, the Mother Goddess's oldest form, carries away the plant that would have granted the hero undifferentiated youth. The snake as undifferentiated Mother Goddess, symbol of eternity, sheds Her skin, devours Herself, and disappears from literature just as literature is born, leaving tension and plot and the futile attempts of male heroes to fight and conquer death reverberating through the next forty centuries of literature. Life and death are no longer one, they are now in eternal tension. When the serpent reemerges centuries later in *Genesis* or centuries after that in *Paradise Lost,* it will usually be associated with only one division of divinity, Satan, the fallen part of a once unified host of angels in eternal war with God. It will bear such little resemblance to the first serpent that the Virgin Mary, pale medieval echo of the Mother Goddess, will usually be depicted in Church statuary as crushing a serpent with her heel. The serpent also leaves behind her the earliest literary example of differentiated aspects of the Mother Goddess in the form of individual characters: the Sumerian goddesses Ishtar and Ninsun and the temple priestesses who manifest the Mother Goddess as individual women.

Heroes are always orphaned, born of the Great Mother as She leaves. One of the definable characteristics of the Western hero is that if he is not a true orphan, he is usually raised by someone other than his biological parents, as are Oedipus and King Arthur. Having an excess of parents often serves to obscure the hero's ties to his biological parents, granting him a certain freedom to stand alone without the burdens and obligations of family ties. One can't save the village or the nation from destruction while concentrating on the more local concerns of a family. As Hank Rearden realizes early in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** he can't devote himself to creating a revolutionary metal with the potential of benefiting the world while squandering his time on pleasing the whims of his wife, mother, and brother.

It was the poets of the invader cultures that first endowed the primal Mother Goddess with distant daughters who had definable personalities and a penchant for action: Athena of Athens, who founded a city; Artemis of Ephesus, who changed Actaeon into a stag; Aphrodite of Cyprus, who helped Paris win Helen. In the minds of Homer and Virgil and Ovid, the Goddess is verbally dismembered into literary immortality.

My point is that literature is not of the Great Mother. Without differentiation, there is no tension. Without tension, without the acknowledgment of differences and opposites, there is no plot line and character, there is no literature. Art is always being born of violence, immortal art of immortal violence. Every word imprisons the blankness of the page; every slash of paint assaults the canvas; every chord rapes silence into shudders of sound waves. Our primary evidence of the Mother's presence is stone carvings, silent, immobile, and undifferentiated in their facelessness.

Dagny is a hero, that is, a character created in the tradition of epic heroes. She also happens to be female.

The problem with Dagny, for many feminist readers who see feminism as inextricably entwined with a collectivist political agenda, is that she thwarts those readers' preference for female "heroes" who are snake goddesses, who represent the utopian "partnership society" that Riane Eisler postulates as having once existed. However, the Western canon has developed and defined a hero archetype that is essentially a character who thrives in what Eisler calls a "dominator society." Goddess help any heroine who smacks of the "dominator," because what's at stake here, from a collectivist perspective, is not her femininity but the crime of excelling beyond her sisters. Collectivist feminists might want Dagny to run the railroad, but only perhaps if she makes it a cooperative venture with other women and disenfranchised men, and doesn't make others feel they can't measure up to her implacable talents. And preferably, it isn't really a railroad that Dagny runs, because there is something vaguely discomforting about the phallus imagery of the trains, no doubt an invention of "male" science and engineering. Collectivist feminists eschew heroines that must be looked up to; they're too hierarchical and "male." But in the Western literary canon, an equal isn't a hero.

And in the mythology of collectivist feminism, a "hero" is more likely to be less-than-equal, oppressed, ignored. Collectivist feminist "heroes" are not figures of national importance; they are oppressed nameless Others who have never "been given a voice" by an oppressive society. They do not represent the highest values of their culture. They spend their time "clarifying and developing new values." They do not traverse physical settings of epic proportion; they "go into themselves." They do not create new worlds or save old ones; "they share insights" and "new ways of defining who we are." They are fictional and they are real because, alternatively, feminist heroes don't exist in the sense of fitting comfortably within a largely male-defined Western hero archetype that defines itself on individual achievement. From a collectivist perspective, every achievement must be redefined as a collective achievement or denigrated as worthless. Every tension, every difference, is

smoothed into the nonexistence of the oceanic womb of primal ooze. "We are all One in the Goddess," goes the cry of contemporary women's spirituality groups. The gods and goddesses do not take an active interest in the actions of feminist heroes, for they are Goddesses. Actionless and whole.[4]

Which is, I suspect, one reason collectivist feminist literary critics have written almost nothing on Rand's work and why Rand's novels are conspicuously absent from most women's studies departments and English-department reading lists. Dagny is, above all, a creature of action and accomplishment. She makes the trains run on time.

The other problem is that Rand herself creates a tension, a verbal dismemberment between her ideal of the "feminine" in her philosophy and in her fictional creations. How does one reconcile Rand's statement that a "woman should not be President of the United States" with Rand's own narratorial comment when describing Dagny's childhood determination one day to run Taggart Transcontinental: "She was twelve years old when she told Eddie Willers that she would run the railroad when they grew up. She was fifteen when it occurred to her for the first time that women did not run railroads and that people might object. To hell with that, she thought—and never worried about it again" (Rand [1957] 1985, 55). Or how does one reconcile Rand's pronouncement that a "feminine woman . . . never loses the awareness of her own sexual identity and [men's] . . . a properly feminine woman does not treat men as if she were their pal, sister, mother—or leader" (Rand [*objectivist*] 1968, 1), with Dagny, who is introduced to the reader as "unfeminine, as if she were unconscious of her own body and that it was a woman's body" (Rand [1957] 1985, 20), and whose first action in the novel is to assume leadership over a group of male railroad workers who are afraid to take responsibility for moving a train that is stopped on the wrong siding. In fact, when a male passenger and the male engineer both sarcastically address her as "lady," and tell her she doesn't know anything about trains and railroad procedures, the scene becomes heavily charged with sexism, but Dagny calmly rises above their prejudices through her competent leadership. After she solves the crisis, the brakeman asks the engineer who Dagny is. "'That's who runs Taggart Transcontinental,' said the engineer; the respect in his voice was genuine. 'That's the Vice-President in Charge of Operation'" (24).

The issue with Dagny that a lot of feminist readers miss is that she is always in charge, even in her relationships with the male heroes of the novel. And I would like to suggest that Rand's philosophical statements about the essence of femininity really come down to that: being in charge. Of course a properly feminine woman does not treat men as if she were their pal, sister, mother—or leader. In the real world, where men have enjoyed centuries of political and economic power over women, "pal, sister, mother, or leader" are all roles that are defined in relation to men.

Perhaps a properly feminine woman has no need to define herself as anyone's pal, sister, mother, or leader (which implies followers). A properly feminine woman is a hero in her own right. She is self-actualized and self-defined without reference to anyone else. Dagny is nobody's pal. In fact, in her youth, potential "pals" constantly tell her she's "unbearably conceited" (55) because she is so work-driven she has no time for social niceties. She is James Taggart's sister, but resists this relationship throughout most of the novel, preferring to be defined by her accomplishments rather than by the accident of her birth. She is nobody's mother, for she is free of children. She is not a leader, because she does not conceive of the social-political hierarchy this implies. Dagny seeks no followers. To the contrary, she views all of the incompetent men and women in the novel with utter indifference unless they are preventing her from accomplishing her work.

In fact, it is striking that in Galt's Gulch, Rand's utopia, there are no leaders and there is no government. There is certainly no president. The gulch is a friendly anarchy of free traders who offer each other the highest respect in terms of trading labor for each other's labor.[5] As John Galt, for whom the gulch is named, explains to Dagny, "we have no laws in this valley, no rules, no formal organization of any kind" (664).

A properly feminine woman is a woman who is strong enough not to have her essential nature defined by anyone else. Dagny defines the meaning of her own actions. The traditional, socially ascribed meaning of her actions does not define her.

For the sake of space, I shall confine myself to three examples of how Dagny defines herself in ways that violate both traditional feminist and traditional anti-feminist expectations. These examples concern Dagny's three lovers, and while they appear to exemplify the apparent disconnect in Dagny's character that might elicit discomfort in many feminist readers, a close reading shows that they actually demonstrate that Dagny is as radically *sui generis* as an epic hero ought to be.

The first action occurs when Francisco d'Anconia slaps Dagny because she half-seriously threatens to lower her standards and become less of an achiever in return for social popularity. The incident is worth quoting at length:

> "Well, I've always been unpopular in school and it didn't bother me, but now I've discovered the reason. It's an impossible kind of reason. They dislike me, not

> because I do things badly, but because I do them well. They dislike me because I've always had the best grades in the class. I don't even have to study. I always get A's. Do you suppose I should try to get D's for a change and become the most popular girl in school?"
>
> Francisco stopped, looked at her and slapped her face.
>
> What she felt was contained in a single instant, while the ground rocked under her feet, in a single blast of emotion within her. She knew that she would have killed any other person who struck her; she felt the violent fury which would have given her the strength for it—and as violent a pleasure that Francisco had done it. . . . *She felt pleasure in what she suddenly grasped about him, about herself and about his motive.*
>
> She braced her feet to stop the dizziness, she held her head straight and stood facing him in the consciousness of a new power, feeling herself his equal for the first time, looking at him with a mocking smile of triumph.
>
> "Did I hurt you as much as that?" she asked.
>
> He looked astonished; the question and the smile were not those of a child. He answered, "Yes—if it pleases you."
>
> "It does."
>
> "Don't ever do that again. Don't crack jokes of that kind. . . . When you grow up you'll understand what sort of unspeakable thing you said." . . .
>
> He looked at her for a long moment. . . . "Dagny, you're wonderful."
>
> "I always thought you thought so," she answered, her voice insolently casual.
>
> (100, emphasis added)

When Dagny returns home, she lies to her mother about the source of her bruise. "She did not do it to protect Francisco; she did it because she felt, for some reason which she could not define, that the incident was a secret too precious to share" (100).

Is the future vice-president of Taggart Transcontinental, Rand's strong epic hero/ine, an oppressed woman reveling in her own abuse? Is this scene meant to be read as a justification for strong men beating strong women, and therefore as evidence of some latent misogyny in Rand's writing? I would argue no, but I would also argue that, in this scene, Rand is subverting the traditional, classic dynamic that often exists in abusive relationships in order to satirize them. To begin with, Dagny, the most brilliant, gifted student in her class, is threatening to destroy her own brilliance in exchange for popularity, something "nice girls" in the 1950s were often socially pressured into doing. Young women in school were often advised to "play dumb" and "hide their intelligence" if they expected to attract young men. Women who haven't been willing to hide their learning and intelligence have been saddled with pejorative terms like "bluestocking" and "witch" for centuries. When Dagny threatens to abuse herself by forgoing her gifts, to "get D's instead of A's," Francisco looks at her in hurt astonishment and slaps her. Note that physical abuse and, in some cases, torture have been methods used traditionally to keep women from excelling, from enjoying too much liberty, from being too uppity. Francisco slaps Dagny for all the opposite reasons—he is hurt that she would even joke about becoming less than what she really is. He is serious about her not compromising her gifts. It is supremely important to him that Dagny be the hero she is, and her threat not to be is as much a slap to him as his physical response is to her.

Maybe even more so, because Dagny, far from feeling broken, smiles in triumph because she understands that Francisco's reaction is a tacit admission of the value he places on her achievement. She takes the slap, *in this context,* coming from Francisco, the only other person Dagny knows at this point in her life who shares with her the realization that "the code of competence is the only system of morality that's on a gold standard" (100) as a personal validation of her worth. Note that Dagny is not masochistic; in fact, she would have "killed any other person who struck her." But coming from any other person (note the neutral word "person," meaning any other man or woman who would have struck her), the slap would have been a punishment for excelling beyond her place, not a response to her refusal to excel. Dagny understands how hard this action would be to explain to anyone else because physical abuse is generally understood as a way to punish women for excelling. She also knows how hard it is for people to recognize her as an aspiring railroad engineer because she is a woman. For these reasons she must keep this incident, precisely because it is a validation the rest of the world would pervert through condemnation, a "secret too precious to share."

I believe that Dagny is the only important female hero in Western literature who is physically struck for refusing to excel at a nontraditional pursuit. Try to imagine Lancelot roughing up Guinevere for refusing to don armor and lead men into battle, or Casaubon roughing up Dorothea for refusing to write better books and to become a more important scholar than he intends to be. It's hard to do, because there is no literary tradition of men valuing women's achievements to the point of exerting violence to defend them, or women hurting men by refusing to excel at traditionally male pursuits.

That is what makes Rand's feminism in her fiction so radical and hard to read. It functions very much like the archetypal epic hero in disguise, the wandering king who appears as a poor peasant, or, in this case, the epic hero figure who appears, for the first time, as a woman.

Another scene that seems to point to a disconnect in Dagny's character involves her second lover, Hank

Rearden, but again the context of this scene is crucial. Rearden earns Dagny's love and admiration through his achievements, not simply through his status as a successful male entrepreneur. She admires Rearden's plans for the bridge for her Rio Norte line as much as she admires him, maybe more. My point is that she loves Rearden because he creates bridges and new metals. She doesn't love the bridges and metals merely for his sake. The difference is that between a traditional woman trapped in dependency and a self-sufficient hero who is strong enough to admire the achievements of another hero. This difference is shown most clearly when Dagny bargains for a bracelet, the first object manufactured with the first heat of the first order of Rearden's new metal, from Rearden's wife, Lillian.

Lillian, the traditional wife, makes a thin, intentionally transparent pretense about admiring this bracelet when Rearden first gives it to her. She does so only because it is from him and she's supposed to do the socially expected thing and say something gracious. Lillian, however, makes sure that her contempt for the gift is conveyed through her sarcastically formulaic appreciation, "Henry, it's perfectly wonderful! What originality! I shall be the sensation of New York, wearing jewelry made of the same stuff as bridge girders, truck motors, kitchen stoves, typewriters, and—what was it you were saying about it the other day, darling?—soup kettles?" (42). A little later, after receiving encouragement from Rearden's mother and brother, who have commented at length on how his intense commitment to work is only selfishness, Lillian holds up the bracelet and comments, "What would happen to Henry's vanity if he didn't have us to throw alms to? . . . A chain. . . . Appropriate isn't it? It's the chain by which he holds us all in bondage" (48).

Lillian's comment is resonant with the way she later perceives Dagny when Dagny enters Lillian's anniversary party. Lillian, who has previously only seen Dagny in business suits, is astonished to see her in a revealing dress, because "one never thought of Dagny Taggart's body. . . . the diamond band on the wrist of her naked arm gave her the most feminine of all aspects: the look of being chained" (133). I feel it necessary to point out the obvious here, that this is not Rand's assessment of femininity but Lillian's, one of Rand's least sympathetic fictional creations. Lillian can only conceive of herself (and, by extension, all women) as essentially dependent and reduced to manipulating and whining for attention. She is threatened by Dagny, whom she later refers to as "perfectly sexless" and "an adding machine in tailored suits" (219), because Dagny violates all the social conventions Lillian has ever known by being a self-sufficient, competent businesswoman. The only way Lillian knows how to make sense of what she perceives as uncharacteristic "femininity" in her rival is a metaphor of bondage, for Lillian only understands femininity as being chained.

Later at the party, Lillian complains to two smartly groomed women about her own bracelet, "Why, no it's not from a hardware store, it's a very special gift from my husband. Oh yes of course it's hideous. . . . I'd exchange it for a common diamond bracelet any time, but somehow nobody will offer me one for it" (151).

Dagny challenges Lillian to make good her offer and extends to her the diamond bracelet she is wearing, which a shocked Lillian accepts in exchange for the metal one. In this exchange, Dagny symbolically makes mincemeat out of the "woman in chains" metaphor because she wears the metal bracelet, not as a chain, but in appreciation of what its metal means to her railroad, her work, and her career. As Dagny clasps the metal bracelet on her wrist, she offers a radical new definition of femininity ironically disguised in the language of tradition: "Inexplicably, she felt a touch of feminine vanity, the kind she had never experienced before: the desire to be seen wearing this particular ornament" (152). This is a rebuke to Lillian's perception, because "particular ornament" implies that it is the metal, not the generic concept of bracelet or chain, that Dagny's "feminine vanity" arises from. It is an ornament of achievement, cast from the very same metal out of which she will build her new railroad line. Dagny's newfound feminine vanity is a result of pride in her achievements as much as, maybe even more than, it is a result of wearing something Rearden made. It's the metal first, and by extension the man who made it.

Dagny's attitude toward the bracelet is a rational one based on values. The metal represents her own work and achievement as much as it represents Rearden's. Lillian's attitude is based on her unquestioning acceptance of the socially defined meanings of material objects. No one ever told her to think of the metal used in bridge girders as romantic, so she doesn't, even though it is just those products of industry that make it possible for her to throw romantic parties in heated rooms with exotic hothouse flowers in the middle of a winter storm. The diamonds have no personal resonance for Lillian. She admires them as a traditional symbol of love, used in rings to symbolize a yoking or a binding, and as a visible sign of wealth. But for her, diamonds represent love and wealth merely because "everyone says" they do, not because she has learned to think for herself and define the terms of her own life. It's social status first, and by extension the diamonds.

When Dagny is alone in her office, thinking about her love for the rails, she articulates the clearest expression of what love and sexual desire mean to a woman who is not oppressed by either: "There was some unbreak-

able link between her love for her work and the desire of her body; as if one gave her the right to the other, the right and the meaning; as if one were the completion of the other—and the desire would never be satisfied, except by a being of equal greatness" (210).

Context is crucial to the scene in which Dagny and Hank Rearden become lovers, because throughout this scene, which many readers have likened to a rape, it is clear that Dagny is the partner who is consciously and rationally in control, not Rearden. Rearden, whose only experience with women has been with clinging dependents like his wife and mother, for a long time has trouble thinking of Dagny as female. Rand makes it clear that this is Rearden's confusion, brought on by a world that has perverted and denigrated what a woman should be and by the difference between Dagny and every other woman he's known. When Dagny tells him she's going to live on the railway site they're building out in Colorado, he worries about her safety, and she laughs, startled. "Why, Hank, it's the first time you've ever thought I wasn't a man" (196). This comment sends Rearden into a troubled internal monologue about his inability to reconcile how society has taught him to regard women and how he regards Dagny: "You trusted me, didn't you? To recognize your greatness? To think of you as you deserved—as if you were a man? . . . Don't you suppose I know how much I've betrayed? The only bright encounter in my life—the only person I respected—the best businessman I know—my ally—my partner in a desperate battle. . . . The lowest of all desires—as my answer to the highest I've met" (196, all ellipses in the original). Rearden has been taught to believe that his sexual desires are low, something to be ashamed of, and he can't reconcile his sexual desire for Dagny with the genuine admiration and respect he has for her. In fact, in another reversal of traditional gender roles, it is Dagny who teaches a confused Rearden about sex. After their first sexual encounter, Rearden vents his confusion and self-loathing in language that, at times, sounds very much like that used for centuries by young women voicing morning-after regrets concerning their loss of honor: "I've given in to a desire which I despise. . . . It's depravity—and I accept it as such. . . . now if you wish to slap my face, go ahead" (243).

In response to Rearden's self-loathing, Dagny laughs, and says without embarrassment the sort of thing that one hears from roguish men in fiction but not women: "That is all I want, Hank. I want you in my bed—and you are free of me for all the rest of your time. . . . I do not want your mind, your will, your being or your soul, so long as it's to me that you will come for that lowest one of your desires. . . . You think this is a threat to your achievement but not to mine. . . . You hold it as your guilt and I—as my pride" (244). It is Dagny who feels no confusion or shame concerning the fulfillment of her desires, which she refers to as her "proudest attainment" (244), and Rearden who comes across like a "fallen woman," riddled with guilt, who nevertheless knows he will fall again, who agonizes over the oath he made to his spouse and his loss of virtue. Rearden does not have the "being-of-equal-greatness" model in his head as Dagny does; he can only understand his experience as a fall from the grace of his own values, and so he suffers the tension of being unable to reconcile the pure desire he feels for Dagny as the embodiment of his own highest values, with the social training that says he's immoral if he prefers a woman who is his equal in the workplace to a wife who despises and denigrates his life's work. Dagny and Rearden are more in the tradition of male buddies who share work activities, and engage "shoulder to shoulder" in traditionally masculine pursuits together, than that of the more familiar Romeo and Juliet kind of lovers one finds in Western literature.

The fact that they each comment on their own feelings, pleasure or shame, in their sexual encounter without seeming to acknowledge the other's feelings is not callousness so much as an implicit recognition that each of them embodies the other's highest values, that they see themselves in each other and have therefore earned the right to be together, as "equal beings of greatness." But it is Dagny who, in the course of the novel, leads Rearden to accept this way of thinking. It is Dagny who leads this particular partnership of equals.

It is also useful to look at Dagny's willingness to become John Galt's housekeeper during her first stay in Galt's Gulch, because at first glance her decision does come across like another potential disconnect. Housekeeping and cooking are traditional, low-value "female occupations" that epic heroes avoid in favor of doing more interesting things like winning battles and saving countries. Why does an important railroad magnate like Dagny volunteer to be a housekeeper and describe herself in self-deprecating terms like "servant" (707)? Context is crucial here, and it is not the context of the real world, where such activities are held as demeaning woman's work, but the context of Galt's Gulch, Rand's utopia and vision of the ideal society of heroes.

Dagny is a trespasser in the gulch. She has unwittingly crashed the gate in her plane and entered utopia without asking for the consent of the inhabitants. As John Galt explains, that gives him the right to hold her there for one month, the same time frame during which the other inhabitants honor a voluntary agreement not to leave the gulch. Furthermore, an account has been established in her name at Mulligan's Bank with money that the philosopher-turned-pirate Ragnar Danneskjöld has taken from state-sponsored looters, a sum that amounts to a refund of what Dagny has paid in income taxes over the years. Galt wishes to charge her fifty cents per day while she is recuperating from her plane crash in his

house, a bill she can pay from her account. Dagny, however, refuses to claim her money, because she can't bear the thought of Danneskjöld, a man she considers so beautiful that she can't endure the thought of him being "subjected to the shocks, the strains, the scars reserved for any man who loved his work" (701), risking his life for her money.

Since Dagny is physically incapacitated and housebound but mobile, there really is little else she can offer as compensation for room and board, and when she proposes to earn her keep as a cook and housemaid, "her voice had the shrewd, confident, deliberating slowness of a trader" (707), not the plaintive wheedling of a would-be dependent. Galt certainly does not expect this offer. Her proposal shocks and surprises him, and he asks her first if that's what she really wants to do before he accepts it. It is also important to note that in strictly economic terms Dagny will make a profit as a housekeeper, because Galt will pay her room and board and $10.00 per month.

A more telling argument, though, is Dagny's own view of housekeeping, which is consciously at odds with everything she's known in the outside world:

> There is reason, she thought, why a woman should wish to cook for a man . . . oh, not as a duty, not as a chronic career, only as a rare and special rite in symbol of . . . but what have they made of it, the preachers of woman's duty? . . . The castrated performance of a sickening drudgery was held to be a woman's proper virtue—while that which gave it meaning and sanction was held as a shameful sin. . . . [previous ellipses in text, following ellipses mine]. . . . She leaped abruptly to her feet. She did not want to think of the outer world or of its moral code.
>
> (720-21)

There's a context that surrounds Dagny's domestic endeavors that many feminists miss, just as Lillian misses the true meaning of the metal bracelet. There's a difference between a woman cooking dinner for a man as a "castrated performance" (interesting word choice), that is, as a dependent housewife who has no other option in life and whose talents and gifts are reduced to kitchen drudgery, and a hero cooking dinner as a rational conscious choice because she wants to offer some kind of payment for room and board and avoid dependency. When Dagny keeps house for John, it is in this sense a heroic act, motivated by her desire not to enter complicity with Ragnar in his having risked his life. She takes pleasure in watching John eat, but it is her own pleasure that concerns her, not his. In a very real sense, in the context of Galt's Gulch, Dagny first has to be a hero herself to be truly capable of keeping house for Galt; that is, she has to have an exceptionally strong sense of self-sufficiency.

When Dagny keeps house for John Galt, it is a heroic act, but that is not the same as saying that *all* domestic work for *all* (or even most) women is heroic. A "rare and special rite" that exists temporarily between Galt and Dagny should never be a "duty" or a "chronic career" as it unfortunately is for most women outside of Galt's Gulch, where the meaning of housekeeping has been corrupted by "second-handers" who feel it is every man's right to have a housekeeper and every woman's duty to be one. This is the attitude that feminists rebel against, but in utopia, the gulch, even "sickening drudgery" is imbued with heroic meaning. In the best of worlds, under the best of circumstances, Rand shows us what traditional female occupations ought to look like—temporary jobs, not "chronic careers," anticipating by several years the feminist stand that women should be paid for housework. It's important to stress that this occupation is temporary—Dagny engages in it for one month. On her return to the gulch at the end of the novel, as the world crashes to an end, we learn that Dagny is going to run the first railroad between New York and Philadelphia, her proper career. It is also worth noting that the residents of the gulch engage in all kinds of occupations, including unskilled manual labor to which the outside world would not generally accord high status. In utopia, the point is to do one's job well, whatever it is.

Just as male heroes throughout the Western canon by tradition have temporarily given up their pursuits for one special lady whom they love—I'm thinking of countless chivalrous speeches where men swear to become their lady's slave and do her bidding just for her favor—Dagny, like a knight errant to his lady, becomes a servant to demonstrate strength, self-sufficiency, competence, and to win favor. But the point is that it's her choice and strength that motivates her to do so.

So why are there so few women in Galt's Gulch, and why didn't Rand create more strong women in ***Atlas Shrugged***? Is Dagny to be read as inherently better or different in kind from all other women, a special case that no other woman can aspire to as a role model? Or is she, as I am arguing, Rand's model of what a strong woman looks like, a rebuke to a world that puts more burdens and restrictions on heroic women than on heroic men?

Cherryl Brooks, Dagny's sister-in-law, offers a possible answer to these questions. Cherryl is a poor shopgirl. Unlike Dagny, she did not inherit a large business to run, and she did not grow up with access to education or training. She is, however, in all respects, like Dagny in terms of her motivation, energy, and drive to succeed. When James Taggart asks her about her life, Cherryl answers:

> "My old man's never been any good, and Ma didn't care whether he was or not, and I got sick of it always turning out that I was the only one of the seven of us

> that kept a job, and the rest of them always being out of luck, one way or another. I thought if I didn't get out it would get me—I'd rot all the way through, like the rest of them. So I bought a railroad ticket one day and left. . . . Oh, I don't know, but . . . [ellipses in text] but people do things in the world. I saw pictures of New York and I thought . . . somebody built those buildings—he didn't just sit and whine that the kitchen was filthy and the roof leaking and the plumbing clogged and it's a goddamned world and . . . we were stinking poor and not giving a damn about it. That's what I couldn't take—that they didn't really give a damn."
>
> (249, all ellipses mine except where noted)

If Cherryl had had Dagny's birth and circumstances, one could easily imagine her running a major business. They are so similar that Dagny tells Cherryl they are sisters "through their own choice" (824), not through Cherryl's marriage to Dagny's brother, James. Unfortunately, Cherryl is young, poorly educated, and naive enough to believe that James Taggart is the true force and brains behind Taggart Transcontinental, and so she worships him as a hero. "Worship" is a word that James Taggart himself uses. "Why do you worry so much about the great men? . . . What are you, a hero worshipper of some kind?" Her quiet response is, "Mr. Taggart, what else is there to look up to?" (248). "Worship" and "look up to" imply hierarchy, not equality. This is why James Taggart is attracted to her. Cherryl knows greatness as something to aspire to, but does not see herself as having reached it. Taggart is flattered by her unearned admiration and eventually marries her, and Cherryl believes for a time that her status as his worshipful wife is higher than anything she might have achieved through her own efforts.

However, when Cherryl learns that James is a complete incompetent who has been taking credit for Dagny's accomplishments, she confronts a devastating insight:

> "Those girls that you used to buy for the price of a meal, they would have been glad to let their real selves become a gutter, they would have taken your alms and never tried to rise, but you would not marry one of them. You married me, because you knew that I would not accept the gutter, inside or out, that I was struggling to rise and would go on struggling—didn't you?"
>
> "Yes!" he cried.
>
> (839)

Cherryl realizes what many feminists would later realize about the institution of traditional marriage, that marriage is a way to control and break a strong woman's spirit, to ensure that she never rises beyond the domestic sphere to become a hero in the (male) world of action. Cherryl runs away in horror of her condition. Her status as the grateful, dutiful wife, in the traditional sort of marriage women have been expected to aspire to for centuries, a marriage that is even likened to a Cinderella fairy tale, is the tool that crushes her spirit. The questions in her head are her response to her oppression: "Why are you doing it to me—she cried soundlessly to the darkness around her. Because you're good—some enormous laughter seemed to be answering from the roof tops and from the sewers" (840). Cherryl chooses death rather than life in a world in which her innate greatness will be used to oppress her, reminiscent of a hero falling on his sword to avoid dishonor.

The fact that a woman like Dagny can and does exist is Rand's rebuke to a world in which female heroes are, in a sense, disguised, unrecognizable. There are fewer female heroes in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** not because most women are inferior to Dagny, but because most women are in situations like Cherryl's. Rand has created a female epic hero, perhaps the first, and the problem some readers have had in recognizing her is that there's really no difference between her and her male counterparts. Like Rearden, many readers in the 1950s were conditioned to view Dagny's attributes as "male" and so could not reconcile her heroic acts with her gender. Some feminists have the same problem, to the extent that some major strains of feminism posit themselves against individual achievement and traditional ideas of heroism, which are defined as "male."

But then, when the Mother Goddess was first written out of Her undifferentiated stone carvings and into Her action-oriented individualized literary manifestations, She too went disguised when she walked among men. Athena always hides herself in armor.

Notes

1. Versions of this myth can be found in Eisler 1988 and Stone 1976. See also Neumann 1955 and Briffault 1927. This myth has also been appropriated for the uses of fiction making by many popular novelists, including Bradley (1982) and Renault (1958).

2. Literary critics have commented on these familiar characteristics of epic heroes so often it almost seems unnecessary to mention them. For five notable classic discussions of epic literature, see Bowra 1945; Campbell 1949, [1952] 1966; Tillyard [1954] 1966; Frye 1957, 315-26.

3. For discussions of Rand's literary influences, see Sciabarra 1995; Gladstein 1984, 76-78. For discussions of Rand's relationship with the motion-picture industry, see Branden 1986, 73-118 and 184-251.

4. This faceless, undifferentiated, nameless, collectivist feminist non-"hero" does not exist in *literature,* although she does exist in many women's groups as a semifictional construction out of real

life. "All heroines are fictional and all heroines are real." I'm primarily thinking of my experiences in many women's groups in which "hero" is a word that is usually reserved to describe an anonymous victim of a horrible crime who now "speaks for all women" because "all women" are defined as undifferentiated, interchangeable victims of patriarchal aggression. These "heroes" never have names, although they sometimes have "names," as in "Jane," who relates what it's like to experience domestic abuse, or "Susan," who relates her experience with incest. None of these figures are ever individually recognizable enough to be fictional characters or real women, but are an undifferentiated amalgam of both. All is One in the Goddess.

Let me add that I am in no way criticizing the ambiguous anonymity of crime victims relating heartbreaking experiences. I am merely pointing out that these semifictional figures are often redefined and co-opted as "heroes" by collectivist feminists, and that this definition of "hero" has nothing in common with the *literary* definition of the traditional epic hero discussed above.

Some readers might find the following anecdote of passing interest in terms of the incompatibility of the Western *literary* canon with collectivist feminist aesthetics. A colleague once wrote a short piece that was intended to be an example of "socialist feminist writing." There were no characters, only abstractions like "the girl," who spent most of her time "frying fish" for "the mothers of the village, of which there were many." None of these abstract noncharacters had any inner life or conflict or an individual name or anything one usually encounters in a literary character. There was no plot. There was no particular setting, except for the abstraction of "the village." This was a deliberate experiment in writing without using any of the traditional Western elements of fiction, in producing something that wasn't "literature" (that patriarchal violent ordering of language to privilege a few males) but rather what the author called a "radical discourse" and a "new way of seeing ourselves." The piece's genre was interesting in terms of this discussion, too, because the piece wasn't differentiated enough to have one. The author said it wasn't fiction and it wasn't nonfiction; it was an undifferentiated blend of both.

5. Rand, of course, often denied that she was an anarchist. There is an interesting contradiction between Rand the political philosopher and Rand the novelist here, but since I am exclusively interested in Rand the novelist, this contradiction lies outside the scope of this essay.

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Diana Mertz Brickell (essay date 1999)

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tions of Ayn Rand, edited by Mimi Reisel Gladstein and Chris Matthew Sciabarra, pp. 319-31. University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.

[*In the following essay, Brickell argues that Rand's philosophy of Objectivism, despite "some antifeminist tendencies," can provide feminism with useful insights into the ways individuals, both men and women, experience and express their gender. As such, the critic adds, "it is one of the few philosophies capable of liberating men and women from the harmful and destructive gender roles that have existed throughout most of human history."*]

Feminist writer Susan Brownmiller once called Ayn Rand "a traitor to her own sex" (1975, 315).[1] In a certain respect, Brownmiller is correct; Rand described herself as a "male chauvinist" (in Merrill 1991, 70). She argued, in one of her only writings on women, that a rational, properly feminine woman would not desire to be president of a nation (Rand [***The Voice of Reason***] 1988, 267). In her ethical writings, Rand used "the rational man" as the exemplar for all humans; in fact, women are rarely even present in examples, except as the wives or lovers of men.[2]

Nevertheless, such a misogynistic image of Ayn Rand is incomplete and misleading; much of Rand's fiction and nonfiction writing, as well as her own life, exemplify important and radical feminist ideals. The heroines of her novels display an intelligence, independence, and emotional strength—coupled with a genuine femininity and sexuality—that is rarely exhibited by female fictional characters. In a 1968 essay, Rand clearly rejected the idea that the intellects or abilities of women are inferior to those of men, arguing that "women need and should have careers, for the same reasons as men" (268). Ayn Rand herself, as a prominent, controversial, and uncompromising woman of ideas, also serves as an inspiration to younger women. In my own case, the fact that the author of ***The Fountainhead*** was a woman was nearly as revolutionary as the ideas contained within the novel.

Rand's writings on explicitly feminist issues, however, constitute only a fraction of what her philosophical thought has to offer feminism. In particular, her Objectivist philosophy can give rise to a unique and valuable perspective on gender, one that is flexible regarding the particular qualities of individuals without lapsing into relativism. Using Ayn Rand's ethical egoism and individualism, and the writings of former Rand associate Nathaniel Branden on sexual identity, we can greatly expand our understanding of the ways in which ideals of masculinity and femininity can and ought to function in our lives. Additionally, Dagny Taggart, the heroine of ***Atlas Shrugged,*** serves as an exemplar for the qualities of independence and authenticity integral to a normative account of gender.

Feminists have always taken an interest in the subject of gender—the ways in which individuals experience and express their biological sex—and for good reason. Conceptions of masculinity and femininity naturally shape an individual's sense of self and interactions with others. How a woman evaluates her physical appearance, the different ways spouses and lovers relate, and the disparate expectations of sons and daughters all rely upon ideals of masculinity and femininity (in addition to moral concepts such as empathy and justice). Moreover, as feminists have successfully argued, implicit notions of behavior appropriate to each sex, retained from childhood, often result in artificial, harmful limitations in men's and women's lives.

However, while feminist writers from the Enlightenment to Betty Friedan generally focused on the influence of gender roles in the lives of individuals, more recent feminist writings on gender tend to devote their attention to the origins and effects of gender roles at a cultural and institutional level. In *Sexual Politics,* for example, Kate Millett (1970) engages in a substantial discussion of the relationship between sex and gender only to conclude that sexual politics is grounded in "the 'socialization' of both sexes to basic patriarchical politics with regard to temperament, role, and status" (26). In the 1995 edition of *Women: A Feminist Perspective,* although two substantial articles discuss sex roles (Lips 1995, 128-48; Henley and Freeman 1995, 79-91), there is only a single paragraph directly addressing how we *ought* to think of ourselves as men and women.

These two feminist commentaries, like so many others, overlook the necessity of offering individuals alternative, nontraditional visions of masculinity and femininity that can be incorporated into everyday life. By regarding the personal as political, these writers inevitably overlook those innumerable aspects of gender that reflect an individual's inner sense of self as a man or a woman—and are therefore profoundly personal. At the root of this feminist social perspective on gender is a form of collectivism, one that regards the groups "male" and "female" as more metaphysically fundamental and ethically important than the individuals constituting that group (Peikoff 1982, 17). As a result, collectivist feminists frequently offer little in the way of guidance toward greater awareness and self-direction in personal ideals of masculinity and femininity.

The collectivist approach to gender is not, in fact, justified by the ways in which ideals of masculinity and femininity are experienced, expressed, or transmitted. It is only individuals who feel joy and confidence in an authentic sense of masculinity or femininity or who endure the pain and alienation of conforming to norms that conflict with their inner characters. Only individual men and women are capable of critically examining and deciding to change the attitudes and behaviors related

to their sex. Broad social changes, as in the case of the feminist movement of the seventies, stem from such changes within a multitude of individuals. Finally, masculinity and femininity, even as norms broadly accepted in a particular society, are only conveyed by particular individuals to other individuals. And so the fact that many elements of our gender ideals are learned from others only requires us to be attentive to the impact of an individual's personal relationships, not to adopt a macro, collectivist perspective on the subject itself.

In contrast to collectivist feminism, Rand's own philosophy is perfectly consonant with the individualist perspective required by the nature of sex and gender. For Rand, any properly grounded science of the humanities has to begin with the study of individual humans, "not any loose aggregate known as a 'community'" ([*Capitalism*] 1967, 15). In the case of gender theory, Rand's individualism necessitates an understanding of the relationship between individual men and women and their ideals of masculinity and femininity before any investigation of the broad social impact of those ideals is undertaken. Additionally, Rand's emphasis on the life and well-being of the individual leads us to a positive account of how men and women ought to think about masculinity and femininity in their own lives.

Before an Objectivist account of gender can be developed, however, we must clarify a distinction largely overlooked by Rand in her comments on femininity—the distinction between the biological concept "sex" and the cultural and psychological concept "gender." "Sex" subsumes the broad physiological variations between males and females, such as the differences in genitalia. "Gender" refers to the acquired (often culturally based) characteristics and ideals through which an individual experiences and expresses his or her sex, such as varying perceptions of sexual intercourse and distinct styles of clothing. As such, these two concepts distinguish an individual's biological sexual identity from the psychological experience and expression of that sexual identity (Branden 1980, 90).

This distinction between sex and gender does not require attributing all differences between men and women (except the obvious anatomical ones) to socialization. Certain feminists, including Gloria Steinem, have adopted this position, which regards sex differences as "artificial and insignificant" and "dismisses all suggestions of genuine, irreducible sex differences as 'sexist,'" on the basis of the belief that "the acceptance of natural sex difference is dangerous" to women (Midgley 1988, 33, 37). Nevertheless, the scientific evidence on biologically based sex differences, such as disparities between male and female brains, points to the opposite conclusion: there may well be significant innate differences between males and females (even if only diverging tendencies) that impact behavior (Gibbons 1995, 119-22).

Nonetheless, proving such differences to be biological is a difficult task, requiring far more than mere widespread asymmetries between the sexes. The distinction between sex and gender demonstrates that the existence of nearly universal differences between men and women within a culture (or even between cultures) could still be the result of upbringing rather than biology. As such, the distinction primarily serves to undermine many traditional arguments for restrictive gender roles, in which a certain set of behaviors, attitudes, and responsibilities are deemed proper to each sex on the basis of pseudoscientific arguments about the different "natures" of men and women. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft attacked Rousseau, in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* for precisely this type of traditionalism. She argued that Rousseau "proceeds to prove that woman ought to be weak and passive, because she has less bodily strength than man; and hence infers that she was formed to please and to be subject to him, and that it is her duty to render herself agreeable to her master" ([1792] 1983, 173).

In more recent years, sociobiologists have argued for traditional sex roles on similar grounds. These arguments attempt to move from general patterns of difference between men and women to normative prescriptions by regarding deviation from those general patterns as a violation of the innate natures of men and women. A clear conceptual distinction between sex and gender shows that these types of arguments require more proof than is (and perhaps can be) offered.

Rand's own failure clearly to distinguish between sex and gender is a contributing factor to her more traditional, rigid views of femininity and masculinity. Both her opposition to a woman president and her advocacy of male dominance and female submission in sexual intercourse can be traced to the portions of her ideals of masculinity and femininity that depend upon fallacious appeals to the nature of men and women.

In her essay **"About a Woman President,"** Rand (1988) argued that a properly feminine woman would not *desire* to be president, not because women lack the necessary intelligence or emotional strength for the job, but due to the psychological requirements of femininity (267-68). In Rand's view, "the essence of femininity is hero worship—the desire to look up to man." This act of looking up "does not mean dependence, obedience, or anything implying inferiority," but rather "an intense kind of admiration" possible only to an independent woman (268). A woman would undermine her capacity to look up to men—and thus her femininity—if she became the president of a nation, for the position would require her "to act as the superior, the leader, virtually

the *ruler* of all men she deals with, [which] would be an excruciating psychological torture" (269).

Although Rand never wrote about her corresponding view of masculinity, clearly it is not the mirror image of femininity, that is, "heroine worship." If that were the case, then for a man to be president of a nation, to be the leader of all the women he interacts with, would be similarly excruciating. Barbara Branden confirms that Rand's perspective on gender was indeed lopsided; she writes, "[M]an, [Rand] would say, is defined by his relationship to reality; woman—by her relationship to man" (1986, 18). Because Rand never justified these conceptions of masculinity and femininity by grounding them in the actual biological differences between men and women, her account resembles traditional appeals to an innate psychology of the sexes.

Rand's views on sexual intercourse—in which psychologically healthy sex entails male domination and female submission—follow a similar pattern. The sex scenes in Rand's novels all involve dominance and submission, often in conjunction with a certain violence and brutality found within them. In the first moments of a meeting between Leo and Kira in ***We the Living*** (1959, 108), "his arms crushed her with the violence of hatred, as if he wanted to grind their coats into shreds against each other." In the "rape" scene from ***The Fountainhead*** ([1943] 1971, 210), it is precisely because Roark's actions are "an act of scorn . . . not love, but defilement," that Dominique does, for the first time, "lie still and submit." In the first love scene between Dagny Taggart and John Galt in ***Atlas Shrugged*** ([1957] 1985, 888), Dagny "felt her teeth sinking into the flesh of his arm, she felt the sweep of his elbow knocking her head aside and his mouth seizing her lips with a pressure more viciously painful than hers."

This theme of male sexual domination over the female in Rand's novels is not merely a reflection of her personal preferences; the same views are formalized in Nathaniel Branden's *Psychology of Self-Esteem,* published shortly after the end of his almost twenty-year association with Rand. In that work, Branden ([1969] 1971, 208) argues that because "man is the bigger and stronger of the sexes" and because "it is [the man] who penetrates and the woman who is penetrated, . . . man experiences the essence of his masculinity in the act of romantic dominance; woman experiences the essence of her femininity in the act of romantic surrender."

The biological facts cited by Branden do not sufficiently validate his connection of masculinity to dominance and femininity to surrender. In fact, Branden's more recent comments on sex and gender have retreated from such strong claims in order to discuss healthy masculinity and femininity in terms of self-acceptance and affirmation of one's sexual nature (1996, 1; 1980, 91). As one might expect, this more recent conception of sexuality is coupled with a clear distinction between sex and gender (or "sexual identity"). In *The Psychology of Romantic Love,* Branden (1980, 90) writes, "while our sexual identity, our masculinity or femininity, is rooted in the facts of our biological nature, it does not consist of our being physically male or female; it consists of the way we psychologically *experience* our maleness or femaleness."

Nathaniel Branden's discussion of masculinity and femininity in *The Psychology of Romantic Love* does, in fact, provide a solidly Objectivist account of one aspect of gender: the internal *experience* of masculinity or femininity. In short, he describes masculinity and femininity as an individual's relationship to his or her sexual nature, where the proper relationship is one of acceptance and celebration.[3] Although Branden does not touch upon the innumerable ways in which individuals *express* that gender to others in their outward behavior, his analysis is significant in its own right and helps account for the function of gender in social interaction.

According to Branden, our sense of masculinity or femininity is "the product and reflection of the manner in which we respond to our nature as a sexual being" (90). A woman's implicit evaluation of the male body, or a man's level of confidence in an intimate encounter with a woman, for example, contributes to that individual's basic sense of self as a woman or a man. And because "we do not experience ourselves merely as human beings, but always as a male or a female," and because "sexuality is an inherent part of our human nature," an individual's "psychosexual identity" is inherently important to his or her life (90-91).

Branden goes on to give a normative account of masculinity and femininity in terms of "an affirmative response to our sexual nature" (91). This, he writes, "entails a strong enthusiastic awareness of our own sexuality; a positive (fearless and guiltless) response to the phenomenon of sex; a disposition to experience sex as an *expression* of the self, rather than as something alien, darkly incomprehensible, sinful, or 'dirty'; a positive and self-valuing response to one's own body; an enthusiastic appreciation of the body of the opposite sex; a capacity for freedom, spontaneity, and delight in the sexual encounter" (91-92).

Branden then informally defines masculinity as "the expression of a man's belief that the creation of woman was nature's most brilliant idea" and femininity as "the expression of a woman's belief that the creation of man was nature's most brilliant idea" (92).

There is an additional element central to the internal experience of masculinity and femininity that Branden does not directly discuss, namely, an appreciation for

what one has to offer the opposite sex as a man or a woman. Within the context of a romantic relationship, the "polarity" between a man and a woman allows a greater awareness of and appreciation for the unique qualities of the sexual self that each individual brings to a relationship (93). These qualities in the other, such as empathy, emotional strength, and openness, can bring a man and a woman a heightened sense of their own masculinity and femininity.

Notably, Branden's account of the internal experience of gender does not prescribe that men ought to have a particular set of qualities and women another. Although differences between the sexes arising from physiology and culture will result in substantial similarities between personal ideals of masculinity and femininity, the genuine normative principles of gender are limited to acceptance and celebration of the sexual self. There is neither need nor justification for sets of masculine and feminine standards of behavior, but rather, as Branden commented in a 1996 interview, a need for greater focus on honest acceptance of our "natural inclinations" with respect to masculinity and femininity, "without concern about cultural stereotypes of what [is] 'appropriate'" (1).

On the one hand, the connection between biology and the internal experience of masculinity and femininity is relatively simple; on the other hand, the ties between biological sex and the outward expressions of masculinity and femininity often seem arbitrary or illusory. How can certain levels of emotional responsiveness, codes of dress, styles of communication, and even colors rightly be considered the province of one sex or the other? What justifies, if anything, the particular connection of certain behaviors, responsibilities, and physical appearances to male or female domains?

One feminist has described the connection between these cultural expressions of gender and biological sex as "a complex web of increasingly tenuous metaphorical association" (Nelson 1992, 147). But "symbolic association" is perhaps a better description; within a culture, certain behaviors take on symbolic meaning and convey information about an individual's sexual self to others. Just as actions such as shaking hands and waving are meaningful by virtue of established social conventions of greeting, so too the way a woman touches a man in casual conversation or the way a man attends to his physical appearance is meaningful by virtue of established conventions or norms of gender. Because these symbolic behaviors convey information, they serve as a window to the characters and personalities of individual men and women, thereby allowing us to make more accurate and quicker judgments about the types of relationships we wish to pursue with them.

Variations in the meanings attributed to these culturally symbolic actions do not just exist between cultures; even within a culture, individuals will interpret identical behaviors differently, as a result of their particular values and beliefs. For example, some men enjoy the forthrightness of an assertive woman, while others feel threatened by it; some women appreciate a man's emotional sensitivity, even though others see it as weakness. And clothing that by some is considered sexy will often be considered by others to be either tame or whorish. The numerous meanings attributed to behaviors greatly diminish the possibility of any significant social ostracism, thus allowing men and women a greater flexibility in their expression of gender. Individuals can feel freer to express natural tendencies, in styles of clothing or ways of relating to others, for example, because they will, in all likelihood, find others who seek out those qualities.

The cultural flexibility of meanings attributed to expressions of gender does not imply that individuals ought to be relativistic in their own judgments of gender norms. On the contrary, the range of meanings requires individual men and women to make countless choices about how to express their masculinity or femininity, thereby necessitating a clear, rational standard by which to judge gender norms. Tradition is certainly no reliable guide to the rationality of gender norms, given the history of destructive, harmful practices—from footbinding and corseting for women to drafting men to go to war (Rand 1988, 119). On the other hand, Ayn Rand's egoism—in which human life is the ultimate standard of value, and the highest ethical purpose of humans is their own life and happiness—equips individuals with a method by which to judge norms of gender (Rand [***The Virtue of Selfishness***] 1964, 25, 27). By that standard, individuals ought to make choices on the basis of whether the symbolic behaviors that express gender further their life and happiness or diminish it. Unlike altruistic and collectivistic ethical standards, Rand's egoism frees individuals from the most common underlying argument for restrictive gender roles—that individual men and women ought to sacrifice themselves for the sake of a higher social good.

Although Rand's standard of value is simple in the abstract, the application of that standard to particular cultural ideals of masculinity or femininity is a difficult process. Because our ideals of gender are deeply integrated into our lives and because there is often a myriad of costs and benefits to gender norms, how to separate the beneficial elements from the harmful is frequently less than obvious. Fortunately, the analyses provided by Susan Brownmiller in *Femininity* and by Warren Farrell in *The Myth of Male Power* are, largely, concrete applications of an ethical standard founded on the individual's life and well-being. Throughout these works, both writers focus on the particular ways in which gender ideals frustrate or further the pursuit of important goals in the lives of individuals.

Based upon Brownmiller's analysis, a woman might ask, for example: Do the requirements of a feminine physical appearance, such as high heels, restrict my movement or cause pain or medical problems? Do they focus my attention on inconsequential details of life, such as the state of my nails? Do they try to impose an unrealistic shape on my body? Do traditional female methods of relating with others prevent me from being taken seriously at work? Do they make it hard for me to refuse requests for favors?

Based upon Farrell's analysis, a man might ask: Do traditional fathering roles leave me less involved with my children than I'd like to be? Does the structure of male friendship inhibit the give and take of emotional support? Do ideals of male bravery that serve to protect women and children result in my taking unreasonable risks? Does the role of material provider of the family push me into a dangerous or unfulfilling job?

Although one might question the universal applicability of Brownmiller's and Farrell's analyses, they are predominantly compatible with the egoistic standard of value found in Rand's ethics. As such, they provide concrete guidance to individual men and women in using that standard to make rational decisions about how to express masculinity or femininity to others.

Because Rand's ethical standard allows for considerable, legitimate variation between individuals, based on their unique qualities and capacities, authenticity in expression of the sexual self is perhaps the most important element of normative gender. Authenticity is the disposition faithfully and openly to present one's inner person to others. As such, it is a species of the virtue of integrity, which Rand (1964, 46) defined as "loyalty to one's convictions and values [and] the policy of acting in accordance with one's values, of expressing, upholding, and translating them into practical reality," a loyalty in which the values in question constitute one's inner self. With respect to gender, authenticity is a natural outgrowth of self-acceptance in the internal experience of masculinity or femininity; if we are honest with ourselves about our sexual nature, then we are likely to be honest about it with others.

In practice, authenticity often requires a great deal of independence and courage, for the social pressure to conform to particular norms of gender can be substantial.[4] As difficult as authenticity may be, individuals can gain greater control over their own lives—when a couple decides that the husband ought to stay at home with the children, when a man asks for emotional support from a friend, or when a woman defends her right not to provide her parents with grandchildren. As such, authenticity in expression of our sexual selves is the way in which an individual honors that part of his or her existence, by refusing to fake it to please others.

In ***Atlas Shrugged,*** Rand illustrates the necessity of authenticity and independence in femininity through the contrast between the characters of Dagny Taggart and Lillian Rearden. Dagny Taggart, the heroine of the novel, never attempts to hide her unusual position as a skilled and highly intelligent railroad executive; she is open and up-front about her beliefs and intentions. For example, in a press conference announcing the opening of a new line, Dagny responds to protests to her lack of altruistic concern for the public welfare by saying, "Miss Taggart says—quote—I expect to make a pile of money on the John Galt Line. I will have earned it. Close quote" ([1957] 1985, 224). This authenticity is coupled with an independence from social ideals of femininity; Rand writes that Dagny "was twelve years old when she told Eddie Willers that she would run the railroad when they grew up. She was fifteen when it occurred to her for the first time that women did not run railroads and that people might object. To hell with that, she thought—and never worried about it again" (55).

On the other hand, Lillian Rearden, one of the antiheroines, is outwardly submissive to others while simultaneously resorting to underhanded tactics in order to control them. At a party, Lillian comments to Dagny, "I am quite resigned to taking second place in the shadow of my husband. I am humbly aware that the wife of a great man has to be contented with reflected glory" (134). Yet Lillian uses her knowledge of an affair between her husband, Hank Rearden, and Dagny in order to manipulate her husband into signing over his most precious possession—the formula and rights to Rearden Metal—to the government.

The sharpest contrast between Lillian and Dagny appears in Lillian's subsequent attempt to force Dagny into appearing on a radio program to praise the government's totalitarian policies. Lillian informs Dagny of how she manipulated Hank into giving up Rearden Metal, saying, "[H]e would have gladly died to defend it, rather than surrender it to the men he despised. . . . I believe that you hold a philosophy which disapproves of sacrifice—but in this case, you are most certainly a woman, so I'm sure that you will feel gratification at the magnitude of the sacrifice a man has made for the privilege of using your body" (788). Lillian then threatens to make the affair public unless Dagny appears on the radio program. Lillian's manipulations, because they depend upon a desire to hide the inner character from public view, are ineffective in light of Dagny's authenticity and independence. Feeling pride, rather than shame, in her affair with Hank Rearden, Dagny exposes the affair herself while on the radio program, in order to show the unjust means used to obtain Rearden Metal (791-93). The true irony of the contrast between Lillian

and Dagny is that while Dagny is widely regarded by the society of ***Atlas Shrugged*** to be wholly unfeminine, Lillian is that society's perfect image of femininity.

Ayn Rand's Objectivism, then, despite some antifeminist tendencies, has substantial philosophical insights to offer feminism. Her ethics provides a fertile ground on which to develop an account of gender sensitive to the unique qualities and dispositions of individual men and women, as well as to the sanctity of the life and happiness of those individuals. As such, it is one of the few philosophies capable of liberating men and women from the harmful and destructive gender roles that have existed throughout most of human history. And so, whatever Ayn Rand's sins, being "a traitor to her own sex" cannot fairly be counted among them.

Notes

1. The relevant material from Brownmiller 1975 is reprinted in the current volume.
2. See, for example, "The Ethics of Emergencies" in Rand 1964, 43-49.
3. As Branden notes (1980, 94), his comments on gender in *The Psychology of Romantic Love* are made within the context of man-woman relationships, "even though much of what is said clearly applies to homosexual love relationships." The discussion here follows that same pattern, not due to any bias against homosexuality, but rather because I suspect that the concepts of masculinity and femininity function somewhat differently in heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Thus, I would neither wish to presume uniformity between heterosexual and homosexual relationships nor attempt a separate discussion of gender in homosexual relationships (a subject of which I have too little knowledge).
4. For men and women who live in an environment, whether a nation or a household, in which violence is inflicted upon those who stray from gender roles, authenticity is obviously impossible and ought not be considered a moral imperative. As Rand said ([1957] 1985, 949), "morality ends where a gun begins."

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Louis Torres and Michelle Marder Kamhi (essay date 2000)

SOURCE: Torres, Louis and Michelle Marder Kamhi. "'The Psycho-Epistemology of Art.'" In *What Art Is: The Esthetic Theory of Ayn Rand,* pp. 23-34. Chicago: Open Court, 2000.

[*In the following essay, Torres and Kamhi examine Rand's 1965 essay "The Psycho-Epistemology of Art" to summarize her aesthetic theory, stressing her claim that art serves an important cognitive, as opposed to social, function in the individual and relating her theory of art to her broader Objectivist philosophy of human knowledge.*]

"While physics has reached the level where men are able to study subatomic particles and interplanetary space, a phenomenon such as art has remained a dark mystery, with little or nothing known about its nature, its function in human life or the cause of its tremendous psychological power." Yet art is of "passionately intense importance and profoundly *personal* concern to most men" and it has existed since the dawn of mankind, prior even to written language.[1] So Rand observes at the outset of **"The Psycho-Epistemology of Art,"**[2] the first and most fundamental of her four essays on esthetics.

The title of the essay is itself significant: Rand's use of the term "psycho-epistemology" (rather than simply "psychology") indicates the emphasis she places on the cognitive role of art. *Psycho-epistemology,* she explains, pertains to the interaction between conscious and subconscious mental processes in human cognition. (18) And it is in relation to the dynamic interaction between these complementary levels of mental activity—an interaction she regarded as crucial in human consciousness—that she analyzes the nature and purpose of art.

The Purpose of Art

Contrary to the view that art serves a mainly social function, Rand argues that the primary function of art pertains to a need of the *individual.* "Art belongs to a non-socializable aspect of reality, which is universal (i.e., applicable to all men) but non-collective: [that is, it pertains] to the nature of human consciousness." (16) She continues:

> One of the distinguishing characteristics of a work of art (including literature) is that it serves no practical, material end, but is an end in itself; it serves no practical purpose other than contemplation—and the pleasure of that contemplation is so intense, so deeply personal that [one] experiences it as a self-sufficient, self-justifying primary.
>
> [16]

Two aspects of this passage require elaboration. First, Rand offers no clue as to the particular kinds of works she has in mind when she speaks of *art*—apart from revealing, parenthetically, her special concern with literature. Nor does she state elsewhere in the essay what forms of art she is considering. She seems to assume that the reader will know what kinds of work she has in mind. Only in her later essay **"Art and Cognition"** does she make clear that by "art," she means the forms traditionally regarded as the *fine arts* (though she does not use that term).[3]

The second point of potential confusion arises from Rand's statement that art is "an end in itself,"[4] serving "no practical purpose other than contemplation." At first glance, her proposition might be mistaken for a conventional "art for art's sake" view, such as that articulated by the influential critic Clive Bell, an early champion of modernist painting. The confusion can be quickly dispelled, however. Unlike Bell, Rand does not detach art's meaning and purpose from life itself. Quite the contrary. Whereas Bell held that a work of art possesses "an intense and peculiar significance of its own . . . *unrelated to the significance of life,*"[5] Rand emphasizes that art is profoundly related to human life. In her view, "art *does* have a purpose and *does* serve a human need; only it is not a material need, but a need of man's consciousness." For her, art is "an end in itself" only in the sense that its primary purpose is not "practical" (or material), but *spiritual.*[6] A work of art is not comparable to a tool such as a hammer or to an article of clothing such as a raincoat—each of which is designed to perform a practical, *physical* function. Art is not "utilitarian" in this sense. But it does have an important *psychological* function.[7]

The fundamental purpose of art, according to Rand, pertains to the conceptual, integrative nature of the human mind—to the fact that "man acquires knowledge and guides his actions, not by means of single, isolated percepts, but by means of *abstractions.*"[8] (17) Her theory of art is therefore integrally related to her theory of knowledge. Just as language serves to convert conceptual abstractions into the "equivalent of concretes" and thereby condenses a vast sum of knowledge, so art, too, satisfies the cognitive need for condensation and "unit-economy"[9]—in a crucially important sphere: the realm of human values and value-judgments. (18)

Metaphysical Value-Judgments

According to Rand, the most important value-judgments each individual forms are *metaphysical* in nature.[10] They are conclusions about the fundamental nature of reality from a specifically human perspective—that is, about oneself, the world, and one's fellow human beings. Because they pertain to the basic aspects of reality that have the greatest impact on human existence, such judg-

ments are crucial to the phenomenon of art. In Rand's view, these "metaphysical value-judgments" implicitly answer certain fundamental questions that are profoundly relevant to human life. For example: "Is the universe intelligible to man, or unintelligible and unknowable? Can man find happiness on earth, or is he doomed to frustration and despair? Does [he] have the power . . . to choose his goals and to achieve them . . . or is he the helpless plaything of forces beyond his control? Is man, by nature, to be valued as good, or to be despised as evil?"[11] The answers to such questions are *metaphysical value-judgments.*[12] (19)

Metaphysical abstractions involve "such a vast sum of knowledge and such a long chain of concepts that no man could hold it all in the focus of his immediate conscious awareness," Rand continues. Yet each human being requires the "comprehensive view of existence" such abstractions provide, whether they are held consciously or subconsciously, explicitly or implicitly.[13] Without such a view, he cannot "integrate his values, . . . choose his goals, . . . [or] maintain the unity and coherence of his life." Here Rand identifies what she considers to be the distinctive function of art: it is the means by which man can summon into "full, conscious focus" his fundamental view of reality. (19)

Although the concept of metaphysical value-judgments is central to Rand's analysis and definition of art, she offers no further explanation or clarification of the concept in **"The Psycho-Epistemology of Art."** As a result, the reader is apt to be somewhat baffled. While one can easily grasp the idea of metaphysical value-judgments as personally relevant conclusions about the fundamental aspects of reality, it is difficult to understand how the specific questions Rand poses would pertain to any art form but literature—unless the given work had a literary or narrative base (biblical, historical, mythological, or fictional) known to the viewer or listener. A full grasp of David's famous painting of the *Death of Socrates,* for example, requires a knowledge of the historical event: without it, one can only sense that some event of great moment is occurring, one cannot guess what values are at stake in the action depicted.[14]

Nor do ethics and moral values appear to be essential to any other art forms. Indeed, this is the first of many instances in which Rand's focus shifts from art in general to the art forms that most interested her: that is, to fiction and drama.

The concept of metaphysical value-judgments, and its relevance to all the arts, becomes clearer in Rand's subsequent essays, however, in which she articulates her concept of *sense of life,* the psychological form in which such judgments are integrated and retained. For now, suffice it to say that, in the broadest terms, metaphysical value-judgments constitute what psychologist Edith Packer has termed "core evaluations"[15] about oneself and about one's relationship to reality and to other human beings.

Rand's Definition of Art

Having introduced her concept of metaphysical value-judgments, Rand defines art as follows:

> *Art is a selective re-creation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value-judgments.*[16]
>
> [19]

Like her analysis of metaphysical value-judgments themselves, Rand's initial explanation of what she means by "a selective re-creation of reality" is stated in the broadest terms:

> [A]rt isolates and integrates those aspects of reality which represent [the artist's] fundamental view of himself and of existence. Out of the countless number of concretes—of single, disorganized and (seemingly) contradictory attributes, actions and entities [in reality]—an artist isolates the things which he regards as metaphysically essential [i.e., fundamental] and integrates them into a single new concrete that represents an embodied abstraction.[17]
>
> [19-20]

Through this process of selective re-creation, the work comes to reflect the artist's "fundamental view" of life, for it embodies or objectifies those aspects of reality that are of greatest personal importance to him. (19-20) When concretized in a work of art, the complex metaphysical abstractions implicit in the artist's view of life can be grasped with unequaled immediacy and emotional intensity.

To illustrate this principle, Rand contrasts two hypothetical sculptures representing man: "one as a Greek god, the other as a deformed medieval monstrosity. Both are projections of the artist's view of man's nature; both are concretized representations of the philosophy of their respective cultures."[18] This elemental contrast between the art of ancient Greece and that of the Middle Ages is one to which Rand will return in a later essay. While the starkness of her comparison does not do justice to the complexity of either culture, it does make her point clear. Each figure reflects the *dominant* metaphysical outlook of the culture in which it was created.[19] For Rand, in sum: "Art is a concretization of metaphysics." (20)

While distinctive and thought-provoking, Rand's definition of art in terms of "metaphysical value-judgments"—or, for that matter, as "a selective recreation of reality"—is by no means self-evident. As the keystone of her theory of art, it warrants a detailed explication and critique. Since her intended meaning will become

clearer in the light of her full analysis of the nature of art, we will reconsider her definition in Chapter 6, after we have presented her theory in its entirety.

The Cognitive Function of Art

Rand's view of the function of art is closely linked to her realist epistemology, her view that all human knowledge is based ultimately on sensory-perceptual experience.[20] She analyzes the nature of art in relation to cognition as follows:

> *Art brings man's concepts to the perceptual level of his consciousness and allows him to grasp them directly, as if they were percepts.*[21]

Rand emphatically concludes: "*This* is the psycho-epistemological function of art and the reason of its importance in man's life (and the crux of the Objectivist esthetics)."[22] (20)

As Rand has indicated, however, it is not with just *any* concepts that art is primarily concerned but, rather, with the basic value-judgments about reality that most profoundly bear upon the individual's life. Only when concretized in a work of art do these important abstractions "acquire the full, persuasive, irresistible power of reality." (23) Like language, then, art serves the basic cognitive need to condense and integrate knowledge and experience into graspable concretes. "Just as language converts abstractions into the psycho-epistemological equivalent of concretes, into a manageable number of specific units—so art converts man's metaphysical abstractions into the equivalent of concretes, into specific entities open to man's direct perception."[23] (20) The old adage that "art is a universal language" is, in this sense, "literally true," Rand observes.[24] (20)

The Creative Process

If art is "a selective re-creation of reality," as Rand maintains, what is the precise nature of the creative, or "re-creative," process in her view? As she explains in another context: "By 're-creation,' I don't mean *copying,* but neither do I mean *creation,* in a mystical sense. I do not mean going contrary to reality. . . . I mean creating *that which could be real, . . . that which is consistent with reality.*"[25] Her conception of re-creation therefore differs significantly from Plato's notion that what the artist does is equivalent to merely holding "a mirror up to nature."[26] Though Rand does not refer to Aristotle in her analysis of the phenomenon of the "selective re-creation of reality," her conception of this process is comparable to Aristotle's understanding of artistic *mimesis* ("imitation"). Whereas Plato had used the term "imitative arts" in a disparaging sense, suggesting a slavish copying of nature (a pejorative connotation that persists in modern English usage), Aristotle broadened and deepened the meaning. For him, as for Rand, artistic "imitation" involved not a literal transcription of reality but rather a process of selecting and transforming aspects of human experience and awareness so that the "likeness" produced conveys through its particular appearance a more general (universal) significance. Rand's term "selective re-creation" suggests more clearly than "imitation," however, the complexity of the process involved, illuminating its purposeful nature.

Literary characterization affords "the best illustration of the psycho-epistemological process" in the creation of art, Rand suggests, since fiction and drama most fully capture the complexity of human character. (20) As a simple instance of the creative process involved in concretizing a particular type of human being, she cites Sinclair Lewis's creation of the eponymous protagonist of his novel *Babbitt.* According to Rand's analysis, Lewis would have selected—from among innumerable traits he identified and evaluated in innumerable men "of a certain type"—those traits he considered most representative, and would have then integrated them into the fictional character of Babbitt. The result so effectively concretizes the idea of a small-town businessman unable to break out of the mold of provincial conformity that, as she points out, the name "Babbitt" has entered the language as a generic term to denote such a person.[27] (21) Rand's analysis of the creative process Lewis probably followed is an intuitive one, informed by her own experience as a novelist.[28] The process she describes in relation to literary characterization applies, in principle, to the kinds of steps every artist goes through, whether he is fully aware of them or not, in the "selective re-creation of reality." The painter or sculptor, too, selects from nature those aspects best suited to his creative purpose.

Art, Religion, and Philosophy

In Rand's view, art, religion, and philosophy are closely related phenomena, in that each serves to provide man with "a comprehensive view of existence." Noting that, historically, art was at first "an adjunct (and, often, a monopoly) of religion"—which was, in her view, "the primitive form of philosophy"—Rand further observes that the art of primitive cultures was "a concretization of their religion's metaphysical and ethical abstractions."[29] (20)

Whether the abstractions objectified by an art work derive ultimately from religious doctrine or belief or from secular philosophic thought, the essential function of art remains the same, in Rand's view. Neither philosophy nor religion could ever fully replace or dispense with art. Owing to the distinctive nature of their cognitive and emotional processes, human beings will always need art to experience their values and their view of life in objectified form.[30] By the same token, art is not "a

substitute for philosophical thought."[31] (22) According to Rand, art depends ultimately on *ideas* and *values,* which are the product of human cognition and evaluation. Even religious abstractions "are the product of man's mind, not of supernatural revelation."[32] Whether an art work concretizes beliefs or values widely held in a given culture, or the revolutionary ideas and values of an individual artist, it is a characteristically *human* product of *human* cognition. While Rand thus rejects the idea of divine inspiration, she nonetheless regards art as profoundly spiritual in its nature and function.

Rand's view of the relationship between art, religion, and philosophy inevitably invites contrast with the thought of Hegel, who has exerted an incalculable influence on art historical theory and criticism.[33] Like Hegel, Rand emphasizes that art, religion, and philosophy are significant products of *mind,* or *intellect,* and serve to convey the highest *spiritual* values. But the resemblance between their views on this triad ends there. Rand's understanding of "mind" and "spirit" could not be more different from Hegel's. For Hegel, "Mind" or "Spirit,"[34] is a *metaphysical absolute,* a higher level of reality which has its own existence and gradually becomes manifest in the human realm through art, religion, and philosophy. Whereas Hegel regards these phenomena as hierarchically related stages of spiritual self-consciousness, Rand completely rejects his metaphysics of spirit. For her, the mind or spirit is to be understood, as the human faculty of awareness and understanding.[35] She views art as uniquely answering a particular cognitive and emotional need of human nature as such, whereas Hegel postulates an historical progression in which human self-awareness will eventually achieve spiritual perfection through philosophy—the highest manifestation of "absolute Mind." According to Hegel, art will then cease to be a "supreme need of the [human] spirit."[36] Contrary to that view, Rand holds that the need for art will remain a constant in human life: "so long as men exist, the need of art will exist, since that need is rooted . . . in the nature of man's consciousness."[37]

Art and Ethics

Rand argues that the need for concretization through art is especially urgent in the realm of ethics. No theoretical treatise—no "list of virtues," however lengthy and detailed, she emphasizes—could adequately convey the concept of an ideal man, for the human mind cannot deal with such a vast number of abstractions. No one could "retranslate all the abstractions into the perceptual concretes for which they stand—i.e., connect them to reality—and hold [them] all in the focus of [his] conscious awareness." Moreover, any such purely theoretical treatise would be "sterile [and] uninspiring," for its ethical principles would remain mere disembodied abstractions, unfathomable and unattainable.[38] (21) That explains why each religion has its own mythology—"a dramatized concretization of its moral code embodied in the figures of men who are its ultimate product."[39] (21) According to Rand: "*Art is the indispensable medium for the communication of a moral ideal.*" (21) Without art, she argues, "ethics remains in the position of theoretical engineering: *art is the model-builder.*" (22, emphasis ours) The work of art serves as a model by embodying the relevant moral principles in clearly perceptible form.[40] Rand employs the same metaphor in an earlier essay, **"The Goal of My Writing"** (1963), in which she writes: "*Art is the technology of the soul.*[41] . . . Ethics is the applied science that defines a code of values to guide man's choices and actions—the choices and actions which determine the course of his life; ethics is the engineering that provides the principles and blueprints. Art creates the final product. *It builds the model.*" (169, emphasis ours)

Although Rand uses the generic term *art* in these passages, it is important to recognize that her remarks on the ethical "model-building" aspect of art works in fact apply primarily, if not exclusively, to the art of *literature*—in particular, to fiction and drama. Commenting on Rand's proposition that art "builds the model," Peikoff correctly argues that not all art performs this function, since "literature . . . alone is able to depict the richness of man in action across time, making choices, pursuing goals, facing obstacles, exhibiting not merely an isolated virtue, but a whole code of them. . . . *The model-building aspect, therefore, . . . is not a universal attribute of art*; and even where it is present, it is not a primary."[42]

Apparently aware, with good reason, that some readers may incorrectly infer from her discussion that the primary focus of "art" (more precisely, literature) is ethical, Rand quickly adds that "moral values are inextricably involved in art, . . . only as a consequence, *not* as a causal determinant: the primary focus of art is metaphysical, not ethical." Art is "the concretization of a moral ideal," she argues, "not a textbook on how to become one." In her view: "The basic purpose of art is *not* to teach, but to *show*—to hold up to man a concretized image of his nature and his place in the universe." And again: "*Art is not the means to any didactic end.* This is the difference between a work of art and a morality play or a propaganda poster."[43] (22) Once more, while Rand's emphasis on the primarily metaphysical (as contrasted with ethical) content of art is appropriate, her view of art as the "concretization of a moral ideal" applies only to some literature and to art works in other media which rely on a literary or narrative base.

Romanticism and Naturalism

To elucidate her view that "the place of ethics in any given work of art" depends on the metaphysical view of the artist, Rand briefly introduces two concepts—Ro-

manticism and Naturalism. These concepts figure prominently in her personal esthetic of literature but are misleading in the context of her theory of art, and have led to much confusion in the meager Objectivist literature on her esthetics. (23) Her analysis of these concepts—both in **"The Psycho-Epistemology of Art"** and in an essay she wrote four years later, **"What Is Romanticism?"** (as well as in several other essays reprinted in ***The Romantic Manifesto***)—is almost exclusively in terms of fiction and drama, and she fails to indicate how her analysis would apply to other art forms.

Rand argues as follows: If an artist believes that man possesses volition, his work will be value-oriented; this is the essence of *Romanticism.* If, on the other hand, an artist is a determinist, holding that human life is controlled by external forces, his work will have an "anti-value" focus; Rand identifies this approach with *Naturalism.* Romantic art, according to Rand, projects "the values man *is to seek*" and presents "the concretized vision of the life he *is to achieve.*"[44] (23, emphasis ours) In contrast, Naturalistic art "assert[s] that man's efforts are futile" and presents "the concretized vision of defeat and despair as his ultimate fate."[45]

Rand's initial focus on the concept of value-orientation as a defining characteristic of Romanticism is particularly confusing in the context of her theory of art. As she argues elsewhere, *all* art (not just Romantic art), necessarily involves values: "It is inconceivable to have an art divorced from values. . . . Values cannot be separated from any human activity. . . . It is impossible . . . to write a book [for example] without some kind of selectivity. . . . Every time a man has to exercise a choice, he is directed by some kind of values, conscious or not."[46]

Delving further into the question in the essay entitled "What Is Romanticism?," Rand offers the following definition: "*Romanticism is a category of art based on the recognition of the principle that man possesses the faculty of volition.*" (99, emphasis ours) Although she employs the generic term "art" in this definition, her subsequent argument explicitly refers only to "the field of literature." (99ff.) Moreover, the attributes she regards as *defining* Romanticism are again specific to fiction and drama and cannot be validly generalized to other art forms. It is clear that by the phrase "recognition of the principle that man possesses the faculty of volition," Rand does not mean simply that the artist exercises volition during the creative process. As we have just noted, *all* art-making, in her view, entails volition. What she means instead is that the principle of volition is objectified in the art work itself. As Rand herself argued in another context, the only way the principle of volition can be fully and clearly objectified is through the presentation of characters engaged in the choice and pursuit of values over time; that is, through their purposeful, on-going actions to gain or to keep their values in the face of obstacles or conflicts, whether internal or external.[47] The only art forms in which that principle can be concretized are narrative and dramatic literature—as Peikoff's previously quoted remarks on the "model-building aspect" of art confirm.[48]

Notwithstanding her numerous references to Romantic "art," Rand offers few clues as to what she considers to be the defining attributes of Romanticism in the visual arts or music.[49] Those she does offer bear no relation to her own definition of Romantic art in terms of the "principle of volition." In her early essay **"The Goal of My Writing,"** for example, she cites a scene from ***The Fountainhead*** in which the architect-protagonist Howard Roark explains to the sculptor Steven Mallory that he wants Mallory to create a sculpture for the Stoddard Temple because his figures "have a magnificent respect for the human being" and represent "the heroic in man." Rand explains that, in this passage, she "was consciously and deliberately stating the essential goal of [her] own work" as a "Romantic Realist." (168) But surely one could attribute "respect for the human being" and a sense of "the heroic in man" to any number of works predating the nineteenth century—for example, various classical Greek sculptures, Renaissance works such as Michelangelo's *David,* or numerous figures by Bernini and other Baroque sculptors, to cite but a few. These works could not properly be termed "Romantic," however, since Romanticism was an historical phenomenon, a product of a unique set of forces in the Western world of the nineteenth century, as Rand herself emphasizes.[50]

Rand's only other reference to Romanticism in the visual arts occurs in the context of her criticism of the "virulently intense antagonism of today's esthetic spokesmen to any manifestation of the Romantic premise in art." (102) She argues not only that they resent plot structure in literature for its "implicit premise of volition (and, therefore, of moral values)" but also that

> [t]he same reaction, for the same subconscious reason, is evoked by such elements as heroes or happy endings or the triumph of virtue, or, in the visual arts, beauty. Physical beauty is not a moral or volitional issue—but the *choice* to paint a beautiful human being rather than an ugly one, implies the existence of volition: of choice, standards, values.[51]
>
> [102, emphasis in original]

Rand's attribution of "the *choice* to paint a beautiful human being rather than an ugly one" to "the Romantic premise [of volition] in art" is mistaken on several counts, however. Most obvious is that artists long before the Romantic era chose to paint beautiful subjects. More troubling, however, is Rand's apparent implica-

tion that the choice to paint a physically *ugly* human being necessarily indicates an *absence* of volition or values. She fails to consider how the individual artist's context and hierarchy of values might affect the significance of his depiction of beauty or ugliness in a given painting. Consider, for example, the insightful portraits Velazquez (1599-1660) painted of the dwarfs of the Spanish court. Although he realistically depicted their physical deformity, that aspect is transcended by the depths of character he captured in each subject—qualities ranging from the serene confidence of his *Don Diego de Acedo* to the fierce pride of his *Don Sebastian de Morra.* Here, as elsewhere, meaning in art resides not merely in the ostensible subject portrayed but, more crucially, in *how* it is portrayed—a principle Rand herself recognizes in other contexts (see Chapter 3).

"Efficacy of Consciousness"

In the concluding paragraphs of **"The Psycho-Epistemology of Art,"** Rand returns to a key question she raised early in the essay: Why is art of such "profoundly *personal* significance" for man? Surprisingly, she introduces an entirely new point here—one of dubious validity, in our view. "[A]ccording to whether an art work supports or negates [an individual's] fundamental view of reality," she asserts, "*art confirms or denies the efficacy of a man's consciousness.*" (24, emphasis ours) Since she offers no elucidation, one can only speculate as to her intended meaning. In her later essay **"Art and Sense of Life,"** Rand repeats this proposition. Since it can be most profitably examined in that context, we defer our discussion of this point to Chapter 3. For now, let us simply repeat Rand's previous claim that art is important because it gives one the power to grasp fundamental ideas about life directly "as if they were percepts." As she unequivocally stated in a proposition we quoted earlier: "*This* is the psycho-epistemological function of art and the reason of its importance in man's life (and the crux of the Objectivist esthetics)."

Notes

1. In arguing that the earliest human beings had "art," Rand is not speaking of the concept but, rather, of its referents. Early man did not require a concept of art in order to paint, sculpt, create myths, or make music. See also Stephen Davies's observation: "The universality of art from the earliest times suggests that art answers to some deep human needs, and that art might serve those needs for so long as the fundamental character of human nature remains unchanged." In Cooper, *Companion to Aesthetics, s.v.* "'end of art,'" 141.

2. Rand's essay "The Psycho-Epistemology of Art," first appeared in *The Objectivist* (April 1965), which she co-founded and co-edited with Nathaniel Branden. The term "psycho-epistemology" was coined by Barbara Branden. See Sciabarra, *Ayn Rand,* 194-95.

3. In "Art and Cognition" (see our Chapter 4), Rand refers primarily to literature, painting, sculpture, and music. Though these forms are generally subsumed by the term "fine arts" (see our Introduction), she never uses that term, instead characterizing them as "the major branches of art" or "the primary arts." (64) Rand regards the "performing arts" (in which she includes dance) as subordinate to these primary arts. Her position on the status of architecture is equivocal and will be discussed by us in Chapters 4 and 10.

4. Elsewhere Rand argues that "[m]etaphysically, *life* is the only phenomenon that is an end in itself." "The Objectivist Ethics," in *Virtue of Selfishness,* 7.

5. Clive Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis" (1912), in *Art,* 28; emphasis ours. In this essay, Bell also maintained: "To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions." (27) In contrast with such views, Objectivism holds that "Art is not 'for art's sake,' but for *man*'s sake." Peikoff, *Objectivism,* 442.

6. By *spiritual,* Rand means "pertaining to man's consciousness"—which includes not only cognition but also values and emotions. "Objectivist Ethics," 28.

7. In the first of her *Lectures on Fiction-Writing* (1958), Rand noted that art is "an end in itself" only as distinguished from utilitarian objects, since nothing is truly an end in itself but man. In stressing that art (in the sense of the "fine arts") is not "utilitarian," she maintains a distinction that was first fully articulated by Aristotle. According to Aristotle, the "practical," or utilitarian, arts are those which "supply the [material] deficiencies of nature in regard to man," who comes into the world in a more helpless state than the other animals—without clothing, means of defense, and so on. In contrast, he held the purpose of the "imitative arts" (later termed the "fine arts") to be "pleasure," in the sense of "rational enjoyment." (See Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art,* 115-16, 118, 121, 198ff., and 207; and Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics,* 62-81.) The view of fine art as nonutilitarian was elaborated in the eighteenth century—albeit with an inappropriate focus on beauty as the source of pleasure, a focus that deflected attention from the broader cognitive function of art envisioned by Aristotle and more fully, if somewhat differently, articulated by Rand. On the eighteenth-century view, see Kristeller,

"Modern System of the Arts," in *Renaissance Thought and the Arts,* 200, 202, 209; and our discussion in Ch. 10.

8. In this context, Rand distinguishes between two main types of abstractions, or concepts, that human beings must form. *Cognitive abstractions* simply "identify the facts of reality" and "deal with that which *is*"—e.g., girl, teacher, chair, food. *Normative abstractions* are more complex in origin, for they involve *evaluating* the facts of reality and prescribing a code of action-guiding principles; they "deal with that which *ought to be* (in the realms open to man's choice)"—e.g., honesty, justice, and courage. According to Rand, normative abstractions, which are the province of ethics or morality (she uses these terms interchangeably), are "derived from and dependent on" cognitive abstractions, because "to prescribe what man ought to do, one must first know *what* he is and *where* he is—i.e., what is his nature (including his means of cognition) and the nature of the universe in which he acts." (18) For Rand's view of *esthetic abstractions,* see Chapter 3.

9. Rand's emphasis on art's relation to the cognitive need for unit-economy bears comparison with Susanne Langer's view of art as *symbolic* in nature (see, for example, *Feeling and Form,* Ch. 3). Langer, too, stresses the importance of selectively condensing vital experience in art. But her term "symbol" (which implies an arbitrary, conventional sign) does not suggest the all-important mimetic character of art, which Rand's theory properly emphasizes.

10. Rand uses the term "metaphysical" in the purely philosophic sense—pertaining to the nature of reality, without quasi-religious or mystical implications of any kind.

11. Note that the last of the questions posed by Rand is clearly normative in content. In another context, she poses a similar series of questions to be answered by philosophy: "Are you in a universe which is ruled by natural laws and, therefore, is stable, firm, absolute—and knowable? Or are you in an incomprehensible chaos, a realm of inexplicable miracles, an unpredictable, unknowable flux, which your mind is impotent to grasp? Are the things you see around you real—or are they only an illusion? Do they exist independent of any observer—or are they created by the observer? Are they the object or the subject of man's consciousness? Are they *what they are*—or can they be changed by a mere act of your consciousness, such as a wish?" In Rand's view, these are the crucial philosophic questions, because "The nature of your actions—and of your ambition—will be different, according to which set of answers you come to accept." "Philosophy: Who Needs It" (originally delivered as an address at the United States Military Academy at West Point, 6 March 1974), 2-3. Rand frames these questions in the broadest, most abstract terms, focusing on epistemological concerns.

12. According to Rand, *metaphysical value-judgments* are of primary importance because they "determine the kind of *ethics* men will accept and practice." (19) This dubious premise—that an individual's morality is *determined* by his fundamental view of reality—recurs at several points in her analysis of art. As we shall argue in Chapter 2, we consider such a view overly simplistic.

13. As Rand argues in her subsequent essays, the subconscious plays a crucial role in the formation and retention of these fundamental metaphysical abstractions, which are largely held implicitly rather than explicitly.

14. For an image of Jacques-Louis David's *Death of Socrates,* see the website of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

15. For further discussion of "core evaluations," see Ch. 2.

16. We offer an extended analysis and appraisal of Rand's definition of art in Chapter 6.

17. Rand's language is less than clear when she states that the art work "represents an embodied abstraction." It might be clearer to say that the art work "concretizes, or objectifies, an abstraction."

18. In arguing that the Greek and medieval sculptures are "concretized representations of the philosophy of their respective cultures," Rand does not imply the Hegelian notion of a *Zeitgeist* which uniformly imbues an entire culture. Rather, her view is that in every culture certain fundamental ideas and values are widely accepted and are therefore generally (but not inevitably) shared by each artist and reflected in his work.

19. Rand's reduction of the complexity of Greek and medieval culture to such simple terms is an effective didactic device to illustrate her thesis that "art is a concretization of metaphysics," reflecting the basic premises of the artist's culture. But one should not regard so stark a characterization as the final word on the subject, as some of her unthinking followers tend to do. Greek culture for them is reduced to an endless parade of "godlike" images, and medieval culture is regarded as utterly devoid of beauty or dignity or value. The result is an impoverishment of both historical thought and esthetic appreciation. See, for example, Ch. 4, n. 36.

20. "Man's senses are his only direct cognitive contact with reality and, therefore, his only *source* of information." Rand, "Kant Versus Sullivan," in *Philosophy,* 90. Rand regards percepts as the basic form of sensory contact with reality. She defines a perception as "a group of sensations automatically retained and integrated by the brain of a living organism, which gives it the ability to be aware, not of single stimuli, but of *entities,* of things." "Objectivist Ethics," 10.

21. The principle Rand formulates here is similar to Hegel's view that "the work of art ought to bring a content before the mind's eye, not in its generality as such, but with this generality made absolutely individual, and sensuously particularized." *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics,* 56. Schopenhauer, too, maintained that the visual and literary arts give perceptual embodiment to "Ideas"—but in Plato's sense of the "the permanent essential forms of the world," which he explicitly differentiated from *concepts.* See, for example, *The World as Will and Representation,* 1:233 and *passim*: also Patrick Gardiner, in Turner, *Dictionary of Art, s.v.* "Schopenhauer, Arthur." Rand rejects the idealist metaphysics of both Hegel and Schopenhauer (which she regarded as rooted in a false mind-body dichotomy), and explains the essentializing character of art in purely epistemologocal, or cognitive, terms.

22. In her *Fiction-Writing* course (Lecture 1), Rand states: "All art is the objectivization [*sic*] of values." Her subsequent discussion suggests that by "values" she means what she later characterized as *metaphysical value-judgments,* in the sense of a view of life.

23. Rand's reference to "entities" in this context departs from her usage in *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology* (6, 157), where she treats entities as solid, perceptible *objects.* Conceived in that way, entities would not include music and literature. (Perhaps Rand ought to have said here that "art converts man's metaphysical abstractions into the equivalent of *entities,* into specific *concretes* open to man's direct perception.") In "Art and Cognition," she commits a similarly careless error regarding the nature of literature, when she refers to a book as a "physical object" comparable to a work of painting or sculpture. See our discussion in Ch. 5, n. 1.

24. In stating that the adage "'art is a universal language' is not any empty metaphor, it is literally true," Rand does not mean that art corresponds to language in every respect.

25. Rand, *Fiction-Writing,* Lecture 1. Regarding the "re-creation of reality," Rand adds: "Conscious and deliberate fantasy is a legitimate method, . . . but one has to know how to use it within a rational framework. . . . [T]here 'fantasy' is used not in a metaphysical sense, but in a purely literary, inventive sense, and proper fantasy, again, has to be consonant with metaphysically proper reality." Rand warmly praises a passage from one of Isak Dinesen's *Seven Gothic Tales,* describing a herd of unicorns grazing in a field. Rand emphasizes that, while unicorns are fantastic creatures, their physical appearance (a composite of characteristics known from various real animals) is familiar through mythology, and Dinesen describes them in such concrete terms that the reader can vividly imagine them. *Ibid.,* Lecture 10; see also Rand, *Art of Fiction,* 125-27, 169-72. Similarly, Leonardo da Vinci advised artists that to "create imaginary animals [that] appear natural," each part should be based on resemblance to that of an existing creature. Notebooks, extracted in Goldwater and Treves, *Artists on Art,* 53, 52.

26. Plato, *Republic* (tr. Cornford), Book X. On Aristotle's different view, see Butcher, 121-22; and Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics,* 125.

27. Rand notes that Babbitt exemplifies a mainly *cognitive* abstraction, rather than a *normative* one—an implicit contrast with her own fictional protagonists, who do embody normative abstractions.

28. An even more illuminating instance of the "selective re-creation of reality" in fiction is the genesis of Ellsworth Toohey, the unforgettable villain of *The Fountainhead,* who is one of Rand's most effective characterizations. As she related to her biographer, she had already formed the broad idea of Toohey as a "leftist intellectual," when she happened to hear a talk by the influential British socialist Harold Laski. "When I saw Laski I knew I was seeing the soul of Ellsworth Toohey in the flesh," Rand recalled. "Thereafter, I just had to remember how Laski lectured—his mannerisms, the pseudo-intellectual snideness, the whole manner of speaking on important subjects with inappropriate sarcasm as his only weapon, acting as though he were a charming scholar in a drawing room, but you could sense the bared teeth behind the smile, you could feel something evil—and I would know how Toohey would act in any circumstance. . . . Even [Laski's] appearance was ideal. I drew a sketch during the lecture, with the narrow cadaverous face and glasses and big ears, and I gave all of it to Toohey." Quoted in B. Branden, *Passion of Ayn Rand,* 139. To have depended exclusively on one model for the character would have yielded a "journalistic" rather than truly fictional result, however, as Rand further explained. It would have been too literal, too biographical. She drew inspiration for added details of Toohey's

persona from several other prominent intellectuals of the time. All these exemplars helped her to concretize a concept that had previously been vague and undefined in her mind, "like an abstract drawing." (139-40)

29. In another context, Rand characterized religion as "an early form of philosophy" in that "the first attempts to explain the universe, to give a coherent frame of reference to man's life and a code of moral values, were made by religion, before men graduated or developed enough to have philosophy." Interview with Alvin Toffler, *Playboy,* March 1964, 40.

30. See also below, n. 38.

31. Rand adds that "without a conceptual theory of ethics, an artist would not be able successfully to concretize an image of the ideal." Thus her focus here is on *moral* values, pertinent only to the field of literature. Yet Rand's fundamental distinction between art, on one hand, and religion or philosophy, on the other, is relevant to all the arts: whereas a work of art conveys abstractions (universals) *implicitly,* they are *explicitly* stated in religious doctrine or philosophy. This distinction is further analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3.

32. Rand, Introduction to the 25th anniversary edition of *The Fountainhead,* viii; reprinted in *The Objectivist,* March 1968, 4.

33. Regarding Hegel's influence on art history, theory, and criticism, see E. H. Gombrich, "'The Father of Art History'," in *Tributes,* 51-69. It is characteristic of Rand that she does not mention Hegel in this context. She rarely cites any philosopher, save for occasional references to Aristotle. Yet Hegel's influence on Russian intellectual life during her formative years was pervasive; see Sciabarra, *Ayn Rand,* esp. 25-31, 34-35, 42, 48, 52. Sciabarra argues that the profoundly dialectical quality of Rand's thought (with respect to methodology, but not to metaphysics) has its roots in the Hegelian tradition. Since the phenomena of art, religion, and philosophy form a central focus of Hegel's thought, Rand's comments constitute an implicit rebuttal of Hegel's "phenomenology of spirit."

Rand's analysis of art, religion, and philosophy is strikingly similar to that of the French literary historian and critic Hippolyte Taine. In his *History of English Literature,* he wrote that "art is a kind of philosophy made sensible, religion a poem taken for true, philosophy an art and a religion dried up, and reduced to simple ideas. There is, therefore, at the core of each of these three groups, a common element, the conception of the world and its principles." Quoted by Joseph Carroll, *Evolution and Literary Theory,* 36. On Taine, see also below, Ch. 2, n. 14.

34. Hegel uses the German word *Geist,* which is variously translated.

35. Nathaniel Branden emphasizes that mind is "a complex architecture of structures and processes. It includes more than the verbal, linear, analytic processes popularly if misleadingly described sometimes as 'left-brain' activity. It includes the totality of mental life, including the subconscious, the intuitive, the symbolic, all that which is sometimes associated with the 'right brain.' Mind is all that by means of which we reach out to and apprehend the world." "What Is Self-Esteem?" paper delivered at the First International Conference on Self-Esteem, Asker/Oslo, Norway, 9 August 1990.

36. Hegel's philosophy of art inspired Arthur Danto to argue more than a decade ago that art "really [was] over with, having become transmuted into philosophy." "The End of Art," in *Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art,* 8. The absurdity of his proposition is evident when one considers that the work he regards as having achieved "absolute knowledge" is represented by, among other things, Andy Warhol's re-creations of Brillo boxes. Anthony Haden-Guest aptly satirizes Danto in a cartoon depicting the two philosophers next to a "Brillo box"; the caption reads: "Professor Arthur Danto showing the peak of late 20th-century philosophy to his colleague, Dr. Hegel." Recently, Danto has explained, with characteristic opacity, that "it was not his view that there would be no more art, . . . but that whatever art there was to be would be made without benefit of a reassuring sort of narrative in which it was seen as the appropriate next stage in the story." *Art after the End of Art,* Introduction. Cartoons by Haden-Guest (including the one cited here) may be viewed at <http://www.artcity.com>. On Warhol see Ch. 14.

37. Rand, "What Is Romanticism?" in *Romantic Manifesto,* 122.

38. Ralph Waldo Emerson similarly observed: "The philosopher has a good deal of knowledge which cannot be abstractly imparted, which needs the combinations and complexity of social action to paint it out. . . . [S]o [he] avails himself of the drama, the epic, the novel, and becomes a poet; for these complex forms allow for the utterance of his knowledge of life by *indirection* as well as in the didactic way, and can therefore express the fluxional quantities and values which the thesis or dissertation could never give." Quoted from Joel Porte, *Emerson in His Journals* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 217, in

Ruth Anna Putnam and Hilary Putnam, "The Quarrel between Poetry and Philosophy," *Bulletin of the Santayana Society,* No. 14 (Fall 1996): 1. The Putnams (1-2) also quote William James, from his essay "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life": "[Philosophic] books upon ethics, . . . so far as they truly touch the moral life, must more and more ally themselves with a literature which is confessedly tentative and suggestive rather than dogmatic,—I mean with novels and dramas of the deeper sort."

39. Although Rand is stressing *moral* values in this passage, it goes without saying that mythology also serves to concretize the *metaphysical* views of primitive cultures.

40. As an example of art's power to project a moral ideal in a readily graspable form, Rand recounts an experience related to her by some readers of *The Fountainhead.* Faced with a difficult moral choice, these readers found that envisioning what the novel's hero, Howard Roark, might do in that situation, quickly led them to understand the principles involved and to identify an appropriate course of action. (22) Such a process requires abstracting the appropriate moral principle from the fictional instance and correctly applying it to the individual's concrete context.

41. Rand's dictum "Art is the technology of the soul" closely resembles Stalin's characterization of the writer as the "engineer of the human soul." On this similarity, see Sciabarra, *Ayn Rand,* 208. Sciabarra points out that Stalin's phrase echoed the beliefs of Nietzschean Marxists, "who saw art as the prime mover of . . . social transformation."

42. Peikoff, *Objectivism,* 420-21, emphasis ours. Few novels exhibit a "whole code" of virtues, of course. Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* is a notable exception, to which Peikoff is probably alluding.

43. Rand's insistence that the primary function of art is not moral instruction has its counterpart in Aristotle's thought. As we have indicated above, n. 17, Aristotle maintained—contrary to many ancient writers—that the principal purpose of poetry, as of all the "imitative arts," was to provide emotional delight and pleasure. Also holding that poetry and even music might be used in the moral education of the young, however, Aristotle (like Rand) did admit a moral function as a "secondary consequence," to borrow Rand's words. See Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry,* 215-22. Hegel, too, argued against the notion that the purpose of art is primarily moral. "Against this [view]," he maintained, "it is necessary to maintain that art has the vocation of revealing *the truth* in the form of sensuous artistic shape, of representing the reconciled antithesis [between spirit and matter]." *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics,* 61.

44. Rand's phrases "is to seek" and "is to achieve"—both of which imply a normative standard or code of action—seem to contradict her prior contention that "art is not the means to any didactic end."

45. Rand's analysis of Romanticism and Naturalism is similar in important respects to at least one standard account. According to Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman, *Romanticism* emphasizes "faith in the individual and in his freedom from rules," whereas *Naturalism* views man as merely another "animal in the natural world, responding to environmental forces and internal stresses and drives, *over none of which he has either control or full knowledge*" (emphasis ours). They further observe: "[*N*]*aturalism* shares with *Romanticism* a belief that the actual is important not in itself but in what it can reveal about the nature of a larger reality; it differs sharply from *Romanticism,* however, in finding that reality not in transcendent ideas or absolute ideals but in the scientific laws which can be revealed through the action of individual instances." *Handbook to Literature, s. v.* "Naturalism." Rand, too, acknowledges that the Naturalist writers had to exercise a degree of abstraction and selectivity: "in order to reproduce 'real-life' characters," they had to differentiate between 'essential' (fundamental) and 'non-essential or accidental' characteristics. In her view, "they were led to substitute statistics for values as a criterion of selectivity: that which is statistically prevalent among men, they held, is metaphysically significant and representative of man's nature; that which is rare or exceptional, is not." "What Is Romanticism?" 117.

    Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman further note that *Romanticism* "tends to see the individual at the very center of all life and all experience, and it places him, therefore, at the center of art, making literature most valuable as an expression of his unique feelings and particular attitudes. . . . It places a high premium upon the creative function of the imagination, seeing art as a formulation of intuitive imaginative perceptions that tend to speak a nobler truth than that of fact, logic, or the here and now. . . . [I]t always seeks to find the Absolute, the Ideal, by transcending the actual, whereas *Realism* finds its values in the actual, and *Naturalism* in the scientific laws which undergird the actual." *Handbook to Literature, s.v.* "Romanticism." See also Jaques Barzun's analysis of Romanticism as "an effort to create order [and values] out of experience individually acquired." *Classic, Romantic, and Modern,* 94.

46. Rand, *Fiction-Writing,* Lecture 1.

47. *Ibid.* In Rand's words: "The literary form expressing the essence of [volitional] action is the *plot.*" "What Is Romanticism?" 100.

48. Rand herself emphasizes that moral values can be *concretized* only through action. She observes that, if a writer merely presents the thoughts of his character, for example, "he has not really objecti-[fied] his story. It might be a very interesting psychological [thesis]—it is not a work of art. Because to be a work of art it has to be presented in terms of reality; . . . [that is,] in terms of *action,* because *that* is the only way values exist or are perceivable in reality." *Fiction-Writing,* Lecture 1. Rand also states that "Romantic literature concerns itself primarily with the issue of the role of values in man's life, and presents man's existence in terms of men's pursuit of values and [the] conflict of their values. The formal expression of that will be a plot structure." With respect to Rand's "principle of volition," which can be concretized only through characters in action: the visual arts can suggest character, and music can suggest movement and action (in a highly abstract fashion); but neither painting, sculpture, nor music alone, without an associated literary text, can represent characters engaged in purposeful action.

49. In arguing that Rand's *definition* of Romanticism applies exclusively to narrative and dramatic literature, we are not suggesting that there is no such thing as "Romantic" painting, sculpture, or music, or that Rand says nothing of value on the subject of Romanticism in literature. Our point is simply that her definition is too narrow to encompass all art forms.

50. "Romanticism is a product of the nineteenth century—a (largely subconscious) result of two great influences: Aristotelianism, which liberated man by validating the power of his mind—and capitalism, which gave man's mind the freedom to translate ideas into practice (the second of these influences was itself the result of the first)." Rand, "What Is Romanticism?" 103. Nonetheless, Objectivists often use the term "Romantic" to characterize art from any period that projects strongly positive qualities or a heroic, inspiring view of man. In so doing, they lapse into an ahistoricism Rand clearly deplored in principle.

51. Notwithstanding our criticism of particular points of Rand's argument, we wholeheartedly agree with her charge that "today's esthetic spokesmen"—the contemporary arts establishment—typically exhibit a profound antipathy toward the embodiment of positive values.

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Tibor R. Machan (essay date 2001)

SOURCE: Machan, Tibor R. "Chapter 1, Intellectual Iconoclast." In *Ayn Rand,* pp. 7-29. New York: Peter Lang, 2001.

[*In the following essay, Machan describes Rand as an "intellectual iconoclast" and a philosopher whose ideas differ in significant ways "from the mainstream of the philosophy of her time." He maintains that while she did not develop her ideas as systematically as thinkers of previous eras, such as Aristotle or Immanuel Kant, she nonetheless "stands out as a uniquely systematic contemporary philosopher," and thus deserves more credit for the "clarity" of her thought.*]

Following Her Own Beat

Just reflecting on the titles of her books gives a clue to the iconoclasm of Ayn Rand. Objectivism—what most would call a type of realism[1]—in metaphysics, a contextualism in epistemology, egoism in morality, capitalism in politics, romantic-realism in literature: these are ways of understanding the world that are largely foreign to our era.

In contrast, the dominant metaphysics in our time has been, well, no metaphysics at all. After some crucial implications of René Descartes' thought and the explicit views of Immanuel Kant, a great many leading philosophers have accepted that metaphysics is impossible or irrelevant—in any case, secondary. Since, or so many prominent philosophers think, we are unable to examine the world independently of how our own thinking influences it, we are not really able to have confidence in what we take to be its essential structure or principles. Thus for many, metaphysical claims turn out to be cultural or even personal prejudices, an ideology in the Marxian sense of that term.

In epistemology, the orthodoxy now tends to be social subjectivism or what Richard Rorty calls solidarity—criteria of truth established by one's group, culture, tribe, or community. This is because rationally based objectivity is impossible to one whose mind conditions one's perceptions. We "climb out of our minds" to make sure the mind's contents correctly match reality. Or to put it another way, we cannot find "a skyhook—something which might lift us out of our beliefs"[2] as we figure out the cognitive relationship we have to the rest of the world. Rand's epistemology is based upon the efficacy of human reason in the task of grasping objective reality.

In ethics, there is little doubt that philosophers who take it seriously champion altruism or utilitarianism. For example, as W. G. Maclagan tells us, in his essay defending the position, that "'Altruism' [is] assuming a duty to relieve the distress and promote the happiness of our fellows. . . Altruism is to . .maintain quite simply that a man may and should discount altogether his own pleasure or happiness as such when he is deciding what course of action to pursue."[3] That such unselfishness is deemed morally superior to other approaches to living is evident throughout much of the world's ethical opinion and in all forms of literature (wherein moral dramas are played out to various degrees of sophistication).[4]

The main trends in political philosophy among the central players in the discipline are, even after the fall of the USSR, some version of socialism—democratic or "market" types—or communitarianism. Some inroad has been made by classical liberal ideas, especially since the publication of Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books) twenty-five years ago. And at public-policy levels, free market ideas have become widely championed. But in academe the collectivist trend continues.

There is no widely accepted idea in the field of aesthetics but certainly no appreciation of romanticism in serious literature is evident anywhere except in some fringe circles.

Accordingly, Rand's challenge to trends in her time reaches to the most fundamental issues in philosophy. The same, however, cannot be said about the relationship with ordinary thinking and conduct. Most individuals are realists, when they give the matter some thought. They do not believe in spirits or ghosts or that someone's mind creates the world except, perhaps, in moments of religious reflection. Most go through their days trusting their ability to know the world by means of their normal faculties, although when discussing it they may say something different because in the abstract areas of reflecting about the world, they tend to pick up what the learned say, what they absorb in the high schools and colleges they attend. Even in morality, most individuals act as if a certain type of egoism is guiding their conduct, thinking of their goals and purposes as most important, their families' and friends' following and then those of their neighbors, and so on. They are what Aristotle called lovers of self: "He therefore who loves and indulges the dominant part of himself is a lover of self in the fullest degree."[5] But when they speak out it is unselfishness that most of them praise.

So while Rand is an intellectual iconoclast, she is not some bizarre thinker, such as Bishop George Berkeley, Jean-Paul Sartre, or Paul Feyerabend—to name a few spanning the past few centuries—whose ideas are anything but in accord with what most individuals take to be obviously true. This may account for why Ayn Rand is a popular novelist but not popular among philosophers, and not even given due respect for her clarity of thought, let alone the content of her thinking.

A Novelist-Philosopher

Ayn Rand called herself a novelist/philosopher. In her essay **"The Goal of My Writing,"** she explained that she wanted to be a novelist from the age of nine. She later found that the worldview which she sought to express was missing from, even denigrated within, her intellectual climate. In order to provide for herself the foundation and context within which she could write her romantic realist fiction, she embarked on the task of developing a rational philosophy.

To convey Ayn Rand's unique philosophical work, let me begin with an outline of her philosophy, Objectivism.

Rand divides philosophy into five major branches: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and aesthetics. This division is not original with her, but it was, in Rand's time, quite out of favor with most academic philosophers. It is the substance of her philosophy within these several branches that gives a better idea as to why Ayn Rand stands apart from the mainstream of the philosophy of her time.

In metaphysics, Rand's philosophy is not exactly Aristotelian realism; she does not see essences (or abstract definitions) as concretely real—but the world undeniably exists, just as in Aristotle's view, independent of what anyone may feel or think about it. It is what it is, period. Existence or reality is acknowledged at the outset, so that the concept of "existence" is axiomatic, undeniable, and necessary—"existence exists," as expressed in propositional form. That fact is evident in any meaningful thought, action, or communication. (We shall later take a closer look at Rand's axiomatic concepts, which comprise a major element of her philosophy.)

No Prior Certainty of Consciousness

Unlike many prominent (academic) philosophers in her day, Rand does not consider epistemology the first field of philosophical inquiry. To do so would be to accept what Rand calls "the prior certainty of consciousness." That is to say, considering consciousness as the first thing we are aware of in reality is a mistake. So epistemology—with its central question, "What is the nature of knowledge?"—is not the primary field of philosophy.

To focus attention on the faculty of awareness prior to acknowledging the existence of that which is the object of awareness is impossible, according to Rand. Aware-

ness cannot be prior to what one can be aware of—*pace* René Descartes—since awareness presupposes something that a consciousness can be aware of. To put it more simply, we know because there are things to be known, so knowledge cannot be the first item on the list of what there is. Thus, the field that investigates the fundamental nature of what exists—that is, what there is to be aware of—must be prior in content, significance, and logic to the field that asks how it is possible to be aware of something.

This can be appreciated on a commonsense level, too. Much of reality had been around prior to the emergence of those beings capable of awareness.[6] That alone indicates why metaphysics, the study of the nature of the basic facts of reality, precedes epistemology, the study of awareness of consciousness of reality.

Those who contend otherwise will argue, however, that for those beings who are aware, namely, ourselves, the fact of our being aware is prior to anything we are aware of. To put it slightly differently, we know ourselves as knowing even apart from what it is that we know—we are self-aware before aware of anything else, just because we are generating understanding and this act is itself primary for us. Or, to put it in a way used by some philosophers, our subjectivity is the primary datum for us, with the actual world lying "out there" and thus having a secondary status in the order of awareness. Yet these views are patently self-contradictory by virtue of affirming real things about us that surely were prior to anyone having figured them out.

There are others, certain members of the Idealist school—including some with a serious theological orientation—who hold that the fact that reality can be understood by a mind such as ours shows that it is fundamentally constituted by a structure of ideas or concepts. Consider that as we understand the world, ourselves included, we do this by means of ideas. (Just consider how confusing it is to enter some Middle Eastern bazaars full of objects we don't recognize.) From considerations such as these, Idealists conclude that a mind must be prior to actual things. If not our own minds, at least the mind of God—or Mind Itself or Soul or Reason—is prior to concrete facts.

This position is implicit in nearly all religious viewpoints, and Hegel, who adhered to a version of it, actually thought of Christianity as a simplified, publicly accessible version of Idealism.

Yet, all of this is a mistake, according to Rand. In knowing ourselves as knowing, as being aware, there must already be an acknowledgment of the reality of something that can be known—even if this something is some aspect of ourselves—otherwise we couldn't be aware of (that is, what we would be doing is not knowing something) and thus be aware of ourselves as knowing. Putting it plainly, again, knowledge implies something knowable apart from knowing itself. An example might be pointing—to understand pointing we must first understand that there are those things at which we can point. Without targets at which we can point, pointing would be incomprehensible.

And this goes for knowing. To know requires something to be known. Minds are not containers of objects—minds can know objects, in part, because they have evolved to depend on this knowledge. Anything that couldn't grasp existent beings with the mind would ultimately perish from lack of skills, which are all based on some measure of understanding. (It is something along these lines that Ludwig Feuerbach argued against Hegel, thus earning the respect of naturalist philosophers of all kinds, including Marx—whose naturalism even Rand seemed to respect in contrast, say, to that of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's idealism.) Let Rand make this point herself:

> If nothing exists, there can be no consciousness: a consciousness with nothing to be conscious of is a contradiction in terms. A consciousness conscious of nothing but itself is a contradiction in terms: before it could identify itself as consciousness, it had to be conscious of something. . . .[7]

Metaphysics as First Philosophy

So Rand claims that metaphysics is the first philosophical branch of knowledge or discipline. And in Rand's exploration of epistemology she attests to this fact by recognizing the axiomatic status of the concept "existence" and the resulting proposition "existence exists," ones that basically refer to reality.

Let me summarize what I will be exploring at some length later: Rand states, "Existence exists—and the act of grasping that statement implies two corollary axioms: that something exists which one perceives and that one exists possessing consciousness, consciousness being the faculty of perceiving that which exists."[8] In other words, that existence exists implies that things of a certain kind exist (that something exists which is a certain kind of something), and that one is capable of perceiving that things of various kinds exist (that one is conscious or possesses the faculty of awareness), but with all these as part of the natural world.

The Aristotelian characteristics of this position are reflected in the fact that the basic axiom is a first principle of existence. It expresses in a different form the basic laws of being in Aristotelian metaphysics. The laws of non-contradiction, identity, and excluded-middle are in Aristotle's philosophy axioms—first principles of reality, of being as such. Axioms for Rand take a simi-

lar position of priority, the first two as facts of nature and all three as items of knowledge. (The axioms are prior to all the rest of human knowledge, but not in self-conscious knowledge—so that while, logically speaking, everyone must accept the axioms, in fact people may not know and may even deny that they accept them, despite the inconsistency of such a denial.)

Rand also rejects any kind of mind-body dualism and sees the human mind as an aspect of the entire individual human being, not some separate entity occupying a superior status in every human being. It is this aspect of her metaphysics that has very serious and iconoclastic implications for ethics and politics—for example, her construal of productivity as one of the highest virtues and her view that the right to private property is a full fledged feature of the right to liberty.

Several consequences are implied by the Randian metaphysical stance. For Rand the nature of reality—what is central, crucial, essential about existence—does not predetermine the kind(s) of things that might exist. As far as this metaphysical position is concerned, there could be many different sorts of things in reality, provided that nothing that exists contradicts anything else—that the existence of any kind of thing is not in contradiction with the existence of any other. Reality does not admit to contradictions, but it does not limit the variety of things that might exist beyond this basic constraint. Furthermore, things can exist without needing to exist necessarily. Nor is our inability to prove their necessary existence any liability, unless we are dealing with things—for which necessary existence or necessity is a requirement (the laws of being, for example).

One of the results of this way of conceiving of existence is that numerous irrationalist worldviews are rendered impossible. As an example, by reflecting on the metaphysical ideas of such thinkers as Hegel—who was basically an idealist for whom Mind or Reason exists prior to anything else that it could be aware of—and Marx—for whom nothing but (dialectically driven) material reality exists—it is possible to learn that their metaphysical positions could not be sound. It does not mean that nothing such thinkers say could be true, only that the basic elements of their systems of ideas could not be sound. Put more simply: The world isn't the way they say it is.

Another result of this metaphysical position is that reductionism (the idea that everything in nature must be one kind of thing—any apparent deviations are but illusion or apparent variations) is not metaphysically reasonable. (Some call this monism, but that is best used to simply affirm the nature of reality as an integrated whole, one, however, not necessarily composed of the same kind of stuff!)

There are both materialist and idealist reductionists within philosophy. Some argue that everything that exists must be a certain kind of material reality (matter-in-motion, process, atomic material substance). Others argue that everything that exists must be a certain kind of mental reality (consciousness, God's mind, transcendental reason, or will). Neither of these positions squares with Rand's Objectivism, although it could not be ruled out that everything at one time might have consisted of such constituents alone—for example, that at the point of the Big Bang just one kind of substance existed. But this is not what reductionists argue. Their point is that reality consists of just one kind of stuff, although appearances may deceive us to think otherwise.

Finally, a powerful implication of Rand's metaphysics is that it is possible that different kinds of causes exist in nature. In contrast to prominent views of causality—in terms of which only the sort of cause can exist that is involved in an event producing a subsequent event—the Randian metaphysics implies something very different. Since there could be different kinds and types of things in nature, and since the causal relationships into which entities can enter depend upon the nature of the entities involved—i.e., what these beings are—different kinds of causes also could exist. (This notion becomes vital in Rand's defense of free will, as manifest in the individual human being's capacity of causing or initiating his or her own thinking process.)

When one reflects on the metaphysical underpinnings of most of today's social sciences, it is easy to discover how prominent the one-kind-of-causality view is. And a crucial result of it has been that human beings as individuals could not be regarded as capable of initiating (causing) action. They cannot have free will, despite the fact that nothing has been discovered in any field of science that rules it out and there are very good reasons to believe that we possess it.[9]

Thus the bulk of social science literature is deterministic; the findings take it as given that whatever occurs in human affairs must be caused by something other than the individual in question. For individuals are by definition not mere events/processes but also entities of a certain (rational) kind.[10] If only events can be causes—as in event A causes event B—then it would appear that individuals cannot be causes. So human individuals, too, must be construed as basically impotent. Thus all views to the effect that human beings can initiate action (have freedom of the will, can choose) are today widely—though not universally—considered either prescientific and nonsensical or indicative of a dualistic reality containing one realm where causality is operative, another where it is inoperative. Both of these alternatives are rejected via Randian metaphysics.[11]

Objectivism in Epistemology

In epistemology, Rand's views are no less at odds with the bulk of positions advanced by philosophers of her day. In the dominant view then, as they emerge in

classes and the professional journals and books, epistemology was construed to be the primary field of philosophy. Therefore, "How do we know reality?" or "What is the nature of knowledge?" are high on the list of questions to be attended to within a comprehensive philosophical inquiry.

It is clear, however, that it is impossible to answer this question if it is the first one, since to answer it one must have a standard by which to determine a correct answer. Without some idea of what counts as correct, the inquiry cannot go far. Indeed, the big problem in epistemology while Rand was doing work in the field is that most theories of knowledge ended in a vicious circle.[12] Unless the metaphysical axioms of what are the basic requirements for something to exist are first identified, the answers to the questions of epistemology cannot be evaluated.

Ayn Rand's ***Introduction to Objective Epistemology*** dwells on one of the "cardinal elements" of Objectivist epistemology, the Objectivist theory of concepts. The work addresses a standard problem in the history of philosophy, that of universals. The issue, in Rand's terms, is:

> Since man's knowledge is gained and held in conceptual form, the validity of man's knowledge depends on the validity of concepts. But concepts are abstractions or universals, and everything that man perceives is particular, concrete. What is the relationship between abstract and concrete beings? To what precisely do concepts refer in reality? Do they refer to something real, something that exists—or are they merely inventions of man's mind, arbitrary constructs or loose approximations that cannot claim to represent knowledge?[13]

I won't attempt to summarize Rand's solution to this problem here—we will consider it later. For now, understand that her views are in considerable conflict not only with what most philosophers in her era said on the issue, but with the main traditions of modern philosophy on this topic, rationalism and empiricism.

As an example, two prominent ideas of what definitions are have gained currency during the last centuries. One holds that a definition must be a statement of the (timelessly) necessary and sufficient attributes or characteristics of being something of a certain kind, and the other that definitions are statements of conveniently or habitually associated characteristics of things with no firm ground to give them validity. The former viewpoint on definitions renders it impossible that a correct, valid definition could ever require modification or change, thus producing the consequence that is expressed by the latter viewpoint—namely, that correct, valid definitions are impossible. In contrast to these two viewpoints Rand develops her idea of contextual definitions. In Rand's own summary:

> An objective definition, valid for all men, is determined according to all the relevant knowledge available at that stage of mankind's development. Definitions are not changelessly absolute, but they are contextually absolute. A definition is false if it does not specify the known relationships among existents (in terms of the known essential characteristics) or if it contradicts the known.[14]

And it will help to add another summary point from her work.

> A definition is the *condensation* of a vast body of observations—and its validity depends on the truth or falsehood of these observations, as represented and summed up by the designation of a concept's essential, defining, characteristic(s).[15]

Even without elaborate study one can pinpoint the crucial differences between Rand's ideas about definitions and the view of most philosophers writing at the time. Rand speaks of definitions being true or false. Most philosophers rejected this and had argued, instead, that definitions may be useful or useless, accepted or unaccepted, stipulated or not, but not firmly, objectively grounded in reality. Since by the tenets of most early twentieth century philosophies a definition states what has been put together as a matter of convenience, decision, or fiat, the question of whether definitions are true or false cannot arise.

Definitions are admitted to serve an important role in any theory, but it is also held that despite their importance there is no objective relationship between such definitions and reality. The reason for this stance is that within many philosophers' views of knowledge it would never be possible for us to tell whether the characteristics of some concept that we have identified as essential really are such characteristics.

In summary, there is widespread skepticism about man's capacity to know the world, including the essential characteristics of the existents that populate the world, not to mention the principles that ought to guide us in our voluntary conduct. Rand's theory of definitions is the result of an entirely different view of human knowledge and stands in opposition to early and mid-twentieth-century philosophy, including its embrace of the alleged dichotomy between knowing that something *is* the case and that one *ought* to do this or that.

Accordingly, for many philosophers, definitions are tautologies, necessary truths "by stipulation" and as such tell us nothing about reality (since any concept we use for thinking or talking about the world is not definable as a tautology or necessary truth). What appear to be exceptions, namely, geometry and law, are supposed to consist of concepts that are part of a system constructed by human beings, which is to say, stipulated.

For most philosophers of her time, then, what is known of the real world is not definable—of concepts that group units on the basis, to use Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous term, only a "family resemblance." In formal (stipulated) systems, we can have definitions that meet the criteria of stating a necessary truth or tautology, but these, in turn, fail to refer to anything real.

Rand rejects this idea. She believes that all concepts can be defined, though not as simply as some philosophers would suggest. She poses the rhetorical question, to make this point, "[W]hy are square circle' or 'male aunt' logically impossible, but 'life without oxygen' is not? Merely because 'square,' 'circle,' 'male' and 'aunt' use simple, almost single-attribute concepts, which do not require a long chain of prior, precise, specific concepts with unequivocal, absolute definitions? Logic, therefore, stops and breaks with reality at the point where a retarded mind (or an anti-effort mind) begins to waver, cloud and vacillate."[16]

For Rand, then, all definitions are contextual but some, because of the simplicity of the concepts being defined, may appear to be more rigorously definable than others. Yet this is because with complex concepts many of us do not sustain the effort to keep up a precise integrating and differentiating process: conceptualization. In fact, she argues, no definitions need to have this attribute of ambiguity. In principle all could be rigorous, precise, albeit contextual. And in many sciences that is just what they are, however far removed they may be from direct perceptual evidence.[17]

Other philosophers have, therefore, misunderstood the nature of definitions, thinking that some of them are stipulated and rigorous, others empirical, thus loose or vague. While they hold to a dualistic view of definitions, Rand holds that definitions are all, in principle, capable of having the same features, stating what—within the range of our awareness of the world—constitutes the essential attributes of what is being defined, moving from the simple to the more and more abstract ones.

Many other features of Rand's epistemology could be discussed, but the above will suffice for illustrating her unorthodox stance. It should be noted, however, that since Ayn Rand's death, philosophy has undergone considerable turmoil. When Ayn Rand first advanced her ideas, a powerful orthodoxy was in the way of positivism and neo-positivism (including pragmatism). Today there is far more experimentation, including a renewed interest in lines of thought that are closer to Rand's than the prevailing orthodoxies were. Aristotelianism is being revived, metaphysics is getting another hearing, and skepticism is struggling with powerful challenges.

Yet, even with these trends, Rand stands out as a uniquely systematic contemporary philosopher. Her work is not, however, as detailed as the works of traditional philosophers; she has simply not spent as much space developing her ideas as did Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, or Kant. (At least her written work is restricted to dealing with some essentials.) To see how her systematic approach to philosophy is manifested, we can now turn to Rand's ethical position.

Ethical Egoism, the Virtue of Selfishness

Objectivism advocates the ethics of rational self-interest. It advocates egoism, although of a type not usually meant when mainstream moral theorists employ the term.[18]

Because many people are familiar with the word "egoism" and few understand its precise meaning, one should be warned that Ayn Rand's egoism is not psychological egoism, not subjective egoism, not hedonistic egoism, not Hobbesian or atomistic egoism, nor, emphatically, egotism. The term that would express Rand's form of egoism best is rational (or, as I have called my rendition of it, *classical*) egoism.[19]

Psychological egoism holds that people are automatically motivated to desire what is in their own interest. This is not a bona fide ethical or moral theory however, because it thereby denies free will.[20] Subjective egoism holds that one should extend one's unique, singular will into the world as far as possible, that one should act to realize one's idiosyncratic desires. This is not a bona fide ethics because it denies that human beings share their human nature, and any system of ethics contains principles applicable to all individuals as human beings. Hedonistic egoism holds that people should do what pleases or satisfies them. Since pleasures are thereby held to be supreme, this is an impoverished ethical system for it disregards the possibility that human beings have proper goals that may require subordinating pleasures. Atomistic or Hobbesian egoism is fully deterministic, based on the view that the self is a bundle of passions driving the individual to achieve their satisfaction. This is not an ethical view because what people are determined to do by forces they cannot control is incapable of being evaluated as right or wrong; what a person cannot help, he cannot take responsibility for.

Of course, a good deal more could be said about each of these positions but the above should suggest why Rand would consider those positions inadequate. In their place—and in the place of all nonegoistic ethics such as utilitarianism, Stoicism, altruism, Kantianism, and so on—Rand proposes her version of ethical egoism.

Ethical or rational egoism is the view that each person should live to achieve his own happiness. The principles of conduct that further the goal of a person's own happiness are moral principles or virtues, the stan-

dards for evaluating human actions and institutions. Happiness is identified by reference to human nature, by what it is to be or to live as a successful human being (always to be implemented in one's particular context). Happiness is the "state of non-contradictory joy," a state in which one has realized his set of consistent goals in life.

The standard version of egoism holds that what we should do is determined by what we should get for ourselves, some kind of fulfillment of desires or attainment of benefits. Rand's version of egoism argues that it is a given that human beings have as their proper goal their own happiness, and ethics identifies the principles which when followed will most likely assure them of reaching that goal. Morality, then, is a system of guidelines to be followed to achieve happiness.

Ethical or rational egoism involves numerous philosophical issues in its development as a theory. It must be possible to identify what human nature is; what "self" means in "self-interest" depends on this. It must be possible to identify the nature of happiness and to learn when some particular individual is happy, as well as what principles of conduct serve to achieve that person's happiness.

Most fundamentally, the ethical system Rand advocates is completely dependent for its philosophical support on Objectivist metaphysics and epistemology—for example, her theory of definition recovers the lost ground of Aristotelian-inspired naturalist meta-ethics whereby human nature is seen as the ultimate standard of value. Without that prior theory, naturalism falters seriously.

Rand's ethics aims, of course, to solve some of the standard problems of moral philosophy. For instance, in terms of this system, morality has a rational, objective foundation—namely, the requirements of man's life *qua* man, as a rational animal. Morality is a necessary element of human life, based on the realization that human beings are free to choose what they will do and that they must choose correctly from among numerous alternative options so as to succeed at life as the sort of entities they are. If one chooses to live a human life, one ought to abide by certain principles of conduct.

Moreover, the Objectivist view of happiness, if right, is the proper goal for each individual at any time. This element provides the thesis its universalism. Yet, because of the indefinite ways individual fulfillment may be achieved, this ethics by no means implies that everyone ought to live the same way. While the general goal is happiness, one person's happiness, or the way to attain it, would not be identical to everyone else's.

Even the principles or virtues—that is, the abstract guidelines to how we ought to act (honestly, courageously, prudently, productively, and, most of all, rationally)—may apply differently for different people, depending on time, place, knowledge, and age. Only the cardinal virtue of rationality is universal; other virtues, like courage, may not be possible for some (e.g., paralyzed) persons. Justice is a virtue that applies in a social context, so a man outside of a society may never have occasion to be just. But everyone must choose to exercise his reasoning capacity, for that is the central condition for living life as a human being.

Objectivist egoistic ethics adds a dimension of realism to moral philosophy which that field has lacked since Kant removed it. Kantian ethics held all moral conduct to be motivated by considerations that may well have nothing to do with actual consequences for life on earth. Any regard for one's own life, even for the lives of others, could have nothing to do with morality. Morality had to be concerned with pure principles of reason. (Thus the well-known slogan that what counts is that someone means well, whatever the consequences; or duty for duty's sake.) There are complicated origins to this way of conceiving of morality, not the least being that knowledge of the world was considered to be very tentative, uncertain, and existence itself was considered to be infinitely changeable, so consequences could not be counted on. But one result of the Kantian approach has been that morality and practical concerns have become dichotomized. Realistic people, people with practical concerns, opted for amoralism, rejecting morality as irrelevant to life. Moralists on the other hand were seen as naive idealists.

In Objectivism all this is rejected and morality is shown to be a practical necessity and possibility for human life. But there is a great deal of honest misunderstanding of this point of view. Thus when Objectivist ethics was explained to many philosophers contemporaneous with Rand, they quickly dismissed it as a case of confusing the practical with the moral "ought." (Social scientists did this even more readily in a knee-jerk fashion.) Sure, they said, it is possible to prove statements of the form: "Johnny should take the train" when one has specified that Johnny wants to go to New York the quickest possible way. But moral "ought" refers to means *and* goals. What should Johnny do and how? Or what should he want to do? These are the morally crucial issues.

Objectivism denies the dichotomy. There is a question about what man's goal is, but this is a question of fact: consider what kind of entity is being discussed, namely a rational animal, a living, biological entity with the capacity and requirement to guide his life by way of conceptual thought. The (proper) aim for such a being is to live as long and as well as possible as the kind of being it is. And morality is a code or system of ethics that specifies the principles that make this possible. The only difference between moral and practical (prudential

or pragmatic) judgments is that the former specify principles and goals pertaining to every human being, whereas the latter concern varied and specialized circumstances, narrower contexts, and intermediary principles and goals.

Some wish morality to be something else, to have a higher mission than being used to guide human life to a successful completion. Such persons are not interested in a rational solution to the problems of moral philosophy. Such philosophers have already accepted the noumenal/phenomenal—otherwise sometimes referred to as the analytic/synthetic, conceptual/empirical—dichotomy and have cut the world up into two irreconcilable realms, requiring faith in the former pair and reason—science (as in empirical science) in the latter.

Once again, Ayn Rand's position is iconoclastic. Rand, indeed, stands in opposition to more than an academic philosophical trend. Since many more people than professional philosophers get involved in moral advocacy, even meta-ethical commentary, Rand is opposed by all those who either advocate some form of self-denying ethics or deny the meaningfulness of ethics in the first place—which is just about everyone who has any views on the subject.

A Radical for Capitalism

The most irksome iconoclasm of Ayn Rand has turned out to be her unabashed pro-capitalist, free market, or laissez-faire stance in the area of political theory. Rand derives from her egoistic ethics a political theory in the tradition of Lockean natural rights. The case is summarized by Rand as follows:

> If man is to live on earth, it is right for him to use his mind, it is right to act on his own free judgment, it is right to work for his values and to keep the product of his work. If life on earth is his purpose, he has a right to live as a rational being.[21]

This argument for natural rights, the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (including property), is traceable to the Greek natural *right*—as distinct from natural *rights*—tradition. (This is also distinct from the Lockean natural rights view; it concerns the correct, right thing to do, not the social-political issue of what we must abstain from doing to others!)[22]

Rand adds some true and valuable premises to the older idea. She considers political theory a sub-field of ethics—the question "How should a human community be organized?" answerable only in terms "How should I, a human being, live my life?" The right way to live is the grounds on which the right principles of social organization and law must be based. The rights of human beings are the principles of community conduct, the basic principles of community action. Douglas Rasmussen and Douglas Den Uyl have dubbed these social "metanorms," the framework of community life that makes living a morally significant life possible *among others*. So if those in one's community are governed by reference to such rights, one has the necessary conditions for choosing whether to act rightly or wrongly, which is the prime objective of justice. (Of course, Rand also held that ethics is most important for one when apart from society, where one is unaided in one's struggle to flourish.)

Some—including Eric Mack who is rather supportive of Rand's philosophy—have criticized Rand for allegedly confusing the two senses of "right," as between "It is right to do X" and "A has the right to do X." Rand of course sees (though does not sufficiently stress) the difference between the two senses of "right," but also correctly links them. The right things for individuals are the basis for the right things for societies. But to have a right to do something is not the same as its being right to do. Having a right to do X means that it is wrong for another to take action against someone doing X. It is right for others to refrain from interfering with one's liberty, although in the more basic ethical sense it may also be wrong for one to choose to do X.

In the Objectivist political theory, as in the Lockean, there could be many ethical improprieties with no legal consequences whatsoever. Only when someone's actions (actually or very probably will) violate the rights of others should their immoral conduct produce retaliatory (legal) responses because then their wrong deeds are also intrusive, interfering with some other person's sphere of responsibility.

Rand believes that such rights derive from the ethics of rational egoism—or the ethics of human flourishing—since it is that school of ethics that guides one to act properly, but doing so must be a matter of choice. Only then can moral credit be earned for it. This, of course, also means that one person's evil deed is not usually preventable by others. Thus, the Objectivist (libertarian)[23] polity is not a utopia, unlike so many others that philosophers have proposed, offering as they do a blueprint for universal human fulfillment or emancipation by means of the structure of community life. The Randian legal system is the kind of polity that promises to provide the framework within which individuals in overlapping communities have the most realistic chance for attaining their own best kind of life on earth, although whether they will is a matter of their own initiative and, of course, some measure of good fortune.

The implication of this political theory for citizenship is that human beings should advocate and implement a free society with inviolate prohibition against all conduct that infringes on the rights of individuals to life, liberty and property.

In terms of Rand's account, a free society for human beings is not simply a free market economy, as many conservatives and even classical liberals—who often reduce all social life to economics—would have it. Nor is it simply a society in which intellectual and artistic conduct are protected against intrusions from the uninvited, as (until the late twentieth century) the modern liberal would have it. The conservatives' compromise ends in the totalitarianism of the fascist state, while the modern liberals' leads to communism or socialism. In either case, the Randian idea implies, the compromise of liberty in favor of controlling some aspect of the lives of human beings must eventually destroy liberty. Nor is democracy any kind of panacea as a bulwark against such a corruption of politics; majorities without sound guidance from ethics and political principles are clearly subject to tyrannical tendencies.

Rand's position succeeds in giving the idea of libertarian polity a thorough philosophical foundation. It reaches all the way to the metaphysical rejection of the mind/body dichotomy, coming through epistemology with the theory of knowledge in terms of which it is shown how moral knowledge is possible, going on to ethics and the egoistic code to guide human life, and culminating in the politics of a free, libertarian social order.

A Romantic Realist

Rand's philosophy extends, of course, to aesthetics as well. Not only does Rand affirm the possibility of aesthetic truth and objective artistic excellence (and degradation, for that matter), but she also affirms a substantive literary aesthetics, a bold romanticism with a realist rational basis to it, thus leading to the affirmation of two features of systems of aesthetics usually found in conflict with each other. Central in Rand's view of art is its role in the life of a thinking animal such as a human being, one with the capacity and vital need for conceptual consciousness in the governance of life.

Romanticism has been placed in opposition to realism because values had been thought to require a departure from reality. But in view of Rand's resolution of this problem she could unhesitatingly affirm the unity of these two aesthetic elements, thereby solving a crucial problem in aesthetics but also setting herself up as being opposed to most major philosophical schools.

Since aesthetics is a normative discipline, seeking as it does standards of artistic excellence, criteria by which to judge art, there is a need for discussing how those standards might be identified. Since many in our age reject the notion that beings have a nature—as in "the nature of human beings," "the nature of governments," or "the nature of art"—standards tend to depend upon subjective factors such as the class or age or culture wherein works of art are created. Indeed, in the postmodern era of the twentieth century, it is passé to even speak of standards. At most one might consider sensibilities, style, finesse, subtlety or such, all pretty divorced from any kind of philosophical foundations.

For Rand, in contrast, there is a clear place for art in human life; thus its standards of excellence have to be established by reference to human nature and human goodness. This suggests that for Rand beauty is far from merely in the eye of the beholder, although the alternative isn't some kind of dogged universalism that pays no attention to human differences. But it remains for others to develop the aesthetics of Objectivism, for Rand did not do so herself.[24]

Rand's Philosophical Influence

What about Rand's influence? She has been influential and successful with a considerable portion of not only the lay reading public but also with a small but prolific group of scholars.

Ayn Rand's novels and books are constant sellers. Still, the literary community has either ignored or scoffed at her, as may be expected. Because she knew early in her life what she wanted and where this could be done with the greatest degree of freedom, Rand emigrated to the USA. There Rand's heretical disposition did hurt her as it might have in ages and societies in which the principles of her own philosophy were and are rejected even more swiftly and forcibly. She did, however, experience ostracism by the intellectual community, just the segment of society she argued was suffering from serious deficiencies in our era (a point that others, too, have made in the latter part of the 20th century). She is written about, now and then (such as the lengthy articles by Claudia Roth Pierpont in *The New Yorker* in 1996, and by Jeffrey Sharlet in *The Chronicles of Higher Education* in 1999), but she is studied by only a small percentage of philosophical allies and a few fervid detractors. The kind of scholarly attention paid to Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Thomas Mann, or John Dos Passos hasn't been accorded her.

Some attribute the shunning of Rand to her lack of literary subtlety, yet no one could call Raymond Chandler or Dashiell Hammett, nor even Sartre or Camus, all that subtle, and each of them receives ample attention, even reverence, from the scholarly community. James Joyce comes to mind as a favorite of contemporary literary scholarship, partly because of the virtuosity with which he fascinated scholars. On the other hand, there are few subtleties in John Updike and Graham Greene, both of whom are also on most lists of the preferred among twentieth century authors.

Our concern, though, is not with Rand's literary achievements. We are focusing on Rand's philosophical work. It does appear, though, that the main reason for

the treatment that Rand receives is that her views—her philosophy of life—are anathema to most prominent scholars who would have to support any serious, lasting work that students at reputable universities, and especially graduate schools, might undertake on Rand's work. Some of this has been changing—with the important book by Chris Sciabarra, *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical* (Pennsylvania State University, 1995) and the work he edited with Mimi Reisel Gladstein, *Feminist Interpretations of Ayn Rand* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), as well as, earlier, Doug Rasmussen and Douglas Den Uyl's collection of studies of Rand's philosophical works, *The Philosophic Study of Ayn Rand* (University of Illinois Press, 1984) and Den Uyl's more recent *The Fountainhead, An American Novel* (Twayne, 1999). But it would be premature to claim that Rand is now the focus of serious, measured, intense scholarly attention around the academic world.

Still, in the professional or academic philosophy journals Rand does not fare anywhere as well as, say, Bertrand Russell or, especially, Ludwig Wittgenstein, she has spawned some serious work throughout this community. In addition, there are or have been specialized journals, such as now defunct *Objectivity*—edited by Stephen C. Boyton—in which Rand's work is the animating idea for most papers, while others such as *Reason Papers*—founded by myself—pay frequent attention to works that develop or criticize Rand's ideas. Any serious student of Rand needs to take a look at the wide array of topics with which the authors of *Objectivity* grapple, as well as at some of the study groups in cyberspace that regularly conduct extensive seminars and produce substantial papers on or inspired by Rand's work.

None of this suggests, however, that Ayn Rand will have made a lasting impact on our world, even on the philosophical trends that are to come. It is certain that she was an iconoclast who acted quite courageously and largely, though by no means unfailingly, abided by her own ethics in her fight for her ideas.[25]

Of course, identifying a contemporary thinker as an iconoclast is problematic. One's own era isn't so clearly characterizable as to make certain who is or who is not truly in tune with it. In addition, in choosing a given person for consideration when that person isn't hailed by one's culture, the author reveals his own esteem or respect for that person. The charge often follows that objective treatment of the person is impossible.

Yet to think this way, to deny objectivity when it is coupled with respect or even admiration, is to confuse objectivity with neutrality or nonpartisanship. A doctor needn't be neutral about a patient's ailment in order to be objective in assessing it, and deciding what treatment it requires. Even a research scientist may have a very strong interest in finding a cure for a disease and precisely for that reason adhere to strict standards of objectivity. And, furthermore, even a devoted fan of a baseball team could make a fair and objective umpire.

The problem of lacking objectivity may indeed exist for the weak-willed, for those who would easily yield to impulses or even likes or dislikes instead of making a careful appraisal. Indeed, slipshod treatment of a favorite subject can result from eagerness to paint the beautiful picture. Nevertheless, there is no necessity about being careless, so there is no necessity to subjectivity. Of course, there are pitfalls when studying someone one admires, since often the admiration tends to run ahead of the justification for it. But it is not impossible to remain objective although it requires discipline.

In the above introductory discussion I have been focusing on sketching some of Ayn Rand's contributions to various traditional branches of philosophy. A detailed analysis and evaluation of some of her work follows.

As a novelist/philosopher Ayn Rand was a unique figure in our culture. As someone who has produced a system of ideas that makes sense of areas of human life which have been all but given up as incomprehensible, she has also been exceptional and certainly iconoclastic.

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Notes

1. She was not an (intrinsicist) realist about universals or the natures of beings, as Plato is supposed to have been. Ideas or abstractions have no separate existence, are not "out there." They—or at least valid ones—are, however, formed by the human mind in accordance with objective facts that are all particular, concrete. In value theory her "objectivism" means that goodness is a demonstrable relationship between something and that which it is good for.

2. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 12.

3. W. G. Maclagan, "Self and Others: A Defense of Altruism," *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 4 (1954): 109-110. Rand is often faulted for getting altruism wrong—it doesn't mean something as excessively other-directed, it is often said, as she contends. But Maclagan, who wanted to get it right in terms

of the teachings of mid-century Anglo-Saxon moral philosophy, puts it exactly as Rand had done, in one of the premier philosophy journals of the time.

4. A sympathetic character in Graham Greene's *Looser Takes All* illustrates the phenomenon when he says, "None of us has a right to forget anyone. Except ourselves." (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1993), p. 51.
5. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (1168b25-1169a8)
6. Of course, once formal theology and even religion begin to color common sense, a different view begins to come to the fore.
7. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Random House, 1957), p. 1015.
8. Ibid.
9. Rand herself believed that since thinking is impossible without it being produced by conceptually conscious beings, and since it is a normative activity—one can do it right or wrong but it ought to be done right—it clearly implies free will. Her argument is in *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Random House, 1957). See my own discussion in "Applied Ethics and Free Will," *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 10 (1993), pp. 59-72.
10. But see Steve Rose, *Lifelines: Biology Beyond Determinism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), wherein the author embraces both a process concept of the human individual—a lifeline—and the idea that human beings possess free will.
11. Ayn Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology, Expanded Second Edition* (New York: NAL Books, 1990), p. 15. Rand states here that "The first concepts man forms are concepts of entities—since entities are the only primary existents. (Attributes cannot exist by themselves, they are merely the characteristics of entities; motions are motions of entities; relationships are relationships among entities.)" Rand here accepts Aristotle's view that beings are basic, while processes, events, relations are always derivative. A powerful challenge to this is provided in Randall R. Dipert's "The Mathematical Structure of the World: The World as Graph," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 94 (July 1997), pp. 329-74. It is not clear, though, whether Dipert's thesis, that the most fundamental elements of the world are relations, implies that Rand is wrong in taking entities to be primary.
12. *Reliabilist* theories in our day would not fit this characterization, although they are recent arrival on the scene. The late J. Roger Lee called my attention to this fact.
13. Ayn Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology, Expanded Second Edition* (New York: Meridian, 1990), p. 1.
14. Ibid. p. 46.
15. Ibid. p. 85.
16. Robert Mayhew, ed., *Ayn Rand's Marginalia* (New Milford, CT: Second Renaissance Books, 1995), p. 77.
17. This may suggest to some that Rand rejects Aristotle's idea that one should not seek the same precision in all the disciplines. In fact, Rand would seem to agree: The standard of precision will be different, depending on the field in question.
18. In Rand's vocabulary the concept "interest" means something different from what it has meant in the Hobbesian and economic social-science vocabulary. For Rand the issue is benefiting oneself in the broadest sense, one might say: *flourishing as a human being*. Egoism doesn't ordinarily mean this for most people, although Rand's point was to call attention to how much—even if not exclusive—attention to one's own life a sound conception of morality requires.
19. Some who are very sympathetic with her ethics—for example, the late J. Roger Lee, Douglas B. Rasmussen and Douglas J. Den Uyl—prefer eudaemonism or the ethics of human flourishing, so as to avoid any association with the subjectivist-atomistic version most philosophers have in mind when they use the term "egoism." Other use "ethical individualism" to mean what is essentially the same position—see, for example, David L. Norton, *Personal Destinies, A Philosophy of Ethical Individualism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976). Eric Mack, in contrast, prefers ethical egoism!
20. Hobbes, who advanced such a psychological egoist view, referred to his system of preferred human behavior as a morality, yet also denied free will and took part in numerous debates championing mechanical materialism and determinism.
21. Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, p. 986.
22. For the distinction between natural right and natural rights, see Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).
23. Rand eschews the term "libertarian" because she considers it unwise to divorce politics from the rest of philosophy, as many vocal libertarians prefer to do.
24. Louis Torres and Michelle Kamhi, *What Art Is: The Esthetic Theory of Ayn Rand* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., Inc., 1999). This work was forthcoming during the writing of the present book.
25. The precise nature of a philosopher's impact upon or importance to us is itself a serious philosophical topic. When Hegel states that "the Owl of Min-

erva flies at dawn," he is suggesting that the philosopher comes into the picture with hindsight—a point that led Marx to exclaim that "philosophers have thus far only interpreted the world, the point, however, is to change it."

Rand often asserted her own superior ethical standing and morally unblemished record. Yet she was often cruel and callous toward innocent students who asked her questions in public forums and then endured unkind thrashings by Rand and her epigone. She also treated some of the greatest minds in human history with disdain—Plato, Hume, Kant (about whom more in my book about Rand). For a detailed account of Ayn Rand's personal life, see Barbara Branden, *The Passion of Ayn Rand* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986). See also, for an illuminating and self-conscious depiction of a fictional rendition of a Randian archetype, the late Kay Nolte Smith, *Elegy for a Soprano* (New York: Villard Books, 1985).

John Lewis (essay date 2004)

SOURCE: Lewis, John. "Kira's Family." In *Essays on Ayn Rand's* We the Living, edited by Robert Mayhew, pp. 285-302. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004.

[*In the following essay, Lewis relates the importance of "certain minor characters" in Rand's early novel* We the Living, *such as Galina, Lydia, Alexander, and Vasili, to the work's main theme of "the individual versus the state," maintaining that it is through the lives of these figures that the author expresses her concern for "the effects of collectivist conditions on real people."*]

We the Living is not a novel that creates false hopes. The people with the highest love for life—characters such as Kira, Leo, and Andrei—are smothered under the totalitarian state, while ruthless mediocrities rise to prominence. But the society of ***We the Living*** does not consist solely of magnificent heroes and consciously heinous villains. Countless people of less exalted status spend their lives trying to cope with inhuman circumstances, struggling to achieve the physical and psychological values needed for a truly human existence. Characters such as Galina, Alexander, Lydia, and Vasili illustrate the deep impact of collectivism on millions of heretofore unacknowledged victims. ***We the Living*** is their story, too.

This chapter will consider the place of certain minor characters—in particular, Galina in comparison to Lydia, and Alexander in comparison to Vasili—in the society of ***We the Living.*** In re-creating the stifling effects of that society on those characters, the novel presents a consistent point of view about the need for freedom by human beings, and the obsessive aim of tyrants to squelch any semblance of freedom wherever it appears. This allows us to consider the economic, intellectual, and moral aspects of the conflict between collectivism and human life. ***We the Living*** is focused on a political theme—the individual versus the state—but in developing that theme the novel never loses sight of the effects of collectivist conditions on real people. Nor does it ever let us forget that those effects are universal, applicable to all men, everywhere.

As complete persons, Ayn Rand's characters are embodied with a full range of thoughts, values, and emotions. But each character is motivated by certain basic premises, the specific ideas and values that lie at the core of his soul and that he has accepted over years. These ideas unite each character into a comprehensive whole, dictating why he speaks and acts as he does. As Ayn Rand taught in her fiction writing seminars, "Good characterization is not a matter of giving a character a single attribute or making him monotonous. It is a matter of integrating his every particular aspect to the total, the focus of integration being his basic premises."[1] We know what makes a character tick when we understand the premises that motivate his actions.

In turn, we know what makes a society tick when we understand the dominant premises accepted by the individuals that constitute it. Ayn Rand's concern to comprehensively re-create totalitarian social conditions places important demands on how she draws those individuals. As each character is tightly integrated by the fundamental ideas he accepts and practices, so the society is integrated by the dominant ideas that are practiced in it. Ayn Rand's portrayal of that society is comprehensive precisely because she creates characters that exhaust the possibilities of thought and action open to people in that society. A reader who ignores the minor characters in ***We the Living*** will fail to grasp the nature of the individual's struggle to attain the values he needs to live, the depths of the collectivist attack on those values, and the richness of the author's systematic dissection of the totalitarian universe.

At the opening of the novel Kira and her immediate family—her mother Galina, her father Alexander, and her sister Lydia—are returning to Petrograd from the Crimea. They anticipate seeing Kira's aunt Maria, uncle Vasili, and cousins Victor, Irina, and Acia. Although these characters are part of the backdrop against which the tragedy of Kira, Leo, and Andrei takes place, each is also a distinct person whom the reader can isolate from the background and consider as an individual. This characterization is achieved through precisely formulated dialogue and tightly controlled action that reveal the fine nuances differentiating the fundamental premises held by the characters.

How do the members of Kira's family reveal these premises? Kira, Galina, Alexander, and Lydia offer unique perspectives on events. They often see the same things from the same vantage point, whether riding in the same rail car, standing on the same street corner or living in the same apartment. Yet they react differently to what they experience, often not even focusing on the same aspects of the scene. When the characters are placed side by side, a reader can clearly comprehend how each is motivated to think and act as he does.

Consider the first glimpses of Kira's family, as they set off by train from the Crimea:

> When they were in the train and the wheels screeched and tore forward for the first time, in that first jerk towards Petrograd, they looked at one another, but said nothing. Galina Petrovna was thinking of their mansion on Kamenostrovsky and whether they could get it back; Lydia was thinking of the old church where she had knelt every Easter of her childhood, and that she would visit it on her first day in Petrograd; Alexander Dimitrievitch was not thinking; Kira remembered suddenly that when she went to the theatre, her favorite moment was the one when the lights went out and the curtain shivered before rising; and she wondered why she was thinking of that moment.
>
> (23)

These inner states reveal what each character thinks is important about his return to Petrograd. Galina Petrovna's concern for their material things, Lydia's desire to pray, Alexander Dimitrievitch's lack of thought about anything, and Kira's anticipation of the rising theater curtain imply fundamental differences in their approaches to the world.

It is important to stress that Ayn Rand's characters are not always aware of their own basic ideas and thought processes. Like many real people, a character may be a type who goes through life on autopilot, without examining the fundamental ideas that he has accepted and that shape his life. The premises that motivate a person's *conscious* thoughts and actions are often held only *subconsciously.* "Subconsciously" here means that the ideas are not in conscious focus and have not been explicitly evaluated, but are rather stored in the mind in an implicit form. Uncritical acceptance and practice have allowed these unexamined ideas to become automatic in the character's thinking. This is not determinism, but rather the recognition that fundamental ideas are important to a person's mental functioning. For example, Lydia's first thoughts are of prayer and the church. She has deeply accepted traditional religious teachings, and they dominate her thinking. These are the ideas she uses to evaluate the world. As the crisis around her deepens, she strengthens her own dependence upon these ideas without ever questioning what they really mean.

In the scene above, none of the characters knows why this particular thought happens to come to mind. It simply rises up into conscious awareness. Only Kira is aware of this issue; only she "wondered why she was thinking of that moment." She is aware of her own thoughts and that there is a reason why she thinks as she does, even though she does not follow through on her own question. Likewise a reader who wishes to understand these characters must follow Kira's lead and ask continually: "What motivated the character to think, speak, or act as he did?"

The crisp dialogue between Kira and her family as they arrive in Petrograd is further evidence for the basic premises motivating them:

> "Well," said Alexander Dimitrievitch, "we're back."
>
> "Isn't it wonderful!" said Kira.
>
> "Mud, as ever," said Lydia.
>
> "We'll have to take a cab. Such an expense!" said Galina Petrovna.
>
> (31)

Other conversations underscore the motivations that lie behind such responses. For instance, as Kira and her family stand on a street corner in Petrograd, Lydia wonders about what the years have done to their relatives the Dunaevs. Galina worries about their fortune. Alexander says it makes no difference. Kira watches the streets (32-33).

Such dialogue is neither arbitrary nor unimportant. Each character is revealing a consistent approach to the scene before him. In essence, Alexander expresses no interest in the present and no expectations for the future; he is simply here, a hapless victim of the Communists. Lydia sees only the mud and trials in this world and awaits the solace of kneeling in the church. Galina remains concerned with her past and present wealth. Kira is enraptured with the wonders in the city spread before her. Each character exposes his deep-seated evaluations of the world, and each will follow a direction set by those evaluations in order to cope with what is to come.

Further analysis of these characters may begin with Kira. In contrast to her mother and sister, Kira is not the kind of person who puts her mind into the service of the mundane. Her vision is not of kerosene stoves and stale bread, but of big cities, epic stories, and lavish artistic productions. She pays no attention to the revolution. She notices neither what she eats nor what she wears. She wishes to learn engineering in order to build great bridges, not to serve society. When her aunt Maria tells her that she should become a typist in order to get lard, sugar, and a chance at high office, her uncle Vasili perceptively replies: "Hell, you can't make a drayhorse out of a racing steed" (36, 39, 41, 135). Kira is a racing

steed not only because of her unwillingness to compromise her exalted view of life in order to obtain a bag of sugar, but because she wants to make her values real through hard, honest work. Engineering is the only profession "for which I don't have to learn any lies" (41-42).

Kira's approach to routine tasks reflects her basic joy in being alive. She has blisters from carrying packages into their new apartment, but her sense of the gaiety of life shines in contrast with Lydia's pain:

> skipping briskly over the steps, sliding down the banister, she met Lydia, climbing up slowly, heavily, clutching the bundles to her breast, panting and sighing bitterly, steam blowing from her mouth with every word: "Our Lord in Heaven! . . . Saint Mother of God!"
>
> (52-53)

Kira, of course, is the major foil to her family, as she is to everyone else in the book. On the train to Petrograd a series of conversations by unidentified passengers about matters of immediate survival—dried fish, sunflower seed oil, acorns, and coffee grounds—leads to this exchange between Kira, Lydia, and Galina:

> "Citizens," Lydia asked boldly, "do they have ice-cream in Petrograd? I haven't tasted it in five years. Real ice-cream, cold, so cold it takes your breath away. . . ."
>
> "Yes," said Kira, "so cold it takes your breath away, but then you can walk faster, and there are lights, a long line of lights, moving you as you walk."
>
> "What are you talking about?" asked Lydia.
>
> "Why, about Petrograd." Kira looked at her, surprised. "I thought you were talking about Petrograd, and how cold it was there, weren't you?"
>
> "We were not. You were off—as usual."
>
> "I was thinking about the streets. The streets of a big city, where so much is possible and so many things can happen to you."
>
> Galina Petrovna remarked dryly: "You're saying that quite happily, aren't you? I should think we'd all be quite tired of 'things happening,' by now. Haven't you had enough happen to you with the revolution, and all?"
>
> "Oh, yes," said Kira indifferently, "the revolution."
>
> (24-25)

Kira and her family exhibit diametrically opposite approaches to reality. Like most people in the novel, Kira's family remains anchored to the commonplace, short-range concerns of life. But Kira is literally unable to force herself to remain oriented to the prosaic; her family has to remind her to do routine tasks like getting bread. She maintains a life-saving contempt for the immediate actions needed to survive and a profound love for the highest values possible to her. She carries in her both "the conviction that labor and effort were ignoble" and a desire for "a future of the hardest work and most demanding effort" (49-50). She is able to ignore the revolution when it is not of immediate concern to her, but she faces it head-on when it affects her values. For instance, on a physical level she understands immediately the consequences of Leo's food speculations (283). Intellectually, she also understands and rejects the ideals of the revolution in her first discussion with Andrei (88-91). Her proper place is not looking down at soup on a stove but rather up at a construction site—or at a hero, like Leo. Kira's rapture toward the sublime is a central issue that makes compromise between her and the people around her impossible.

But this distinction between Kira and everyone else is not sufficient to explain the motivations of the others. The members of her family are individuals, and they have accepted subtly different ideas and ways of thinking. To grasp the nuances of difference between the other members of Kira's family, the reader must understand the different layers of characterization provided by the author.

On the surface, Galina Petrovna and her daughter Lydia often express similar values. During their trip back to Petrograd they both make the sign of the cross when they find a place in a boxcar (28). Both react passionately to Chopin (93). They remain united in their opposition to declining standards of morality, specifically against "Pagans" and Kira's living with Leo (115, 132). Lydia, like the masses crowding the churches, prayed for Russia and for the fear in her heart, and Galina also hoped that God would forgive and lead them (146-47). Clearly the two women share strong moral, religious, and aesthetic values that are expressed in terms of standards taken from a dying old world.[2]

However, important differences between them are evident. Galina is concerned primarily with practical material issues, while Lydia is rather more taken with matters of the "spirit." Once Lydia understands that material prosperity is gone forever, her early attempts to show off her wealth and social position give way to a stronger commitment to religious idealism. Lydia's view of morality is more solidly anchored in orthodox religion than is her mother's; she accepts the mystical tradition that Holy Mother Russia will be saved by divine intervention:

> . . . spiritual consolation. I know. It has been revealed to me. There are secrets beyond our mortal minds. Holy Russia's salvation will come from faith. It has been predicted. Through patience and long suffering we shall redeem our sins. . . .
>
> (272-73)

Lydia's premise of salvation through faith provides her with consolation, a sense of moral rightness and hope

for the future. As time passes the power of this idea intensifies in her soul, and becomes her dominant means of dealing with life.

In contrast, Galina will turn from the promise of the church to the promises of the Communist revolution. The seeds of her attitude toward the Communists began to sprout at the first family get-together at the Dunaev apartment: Galina was aghast at the suggestion that Alexander should take a Soviet job, but she smiled in admiration at Victor's claim to be turning the situation to his own benefit (38). She sees Victor as practical, like herself, and amenable to the "new realities" of the day. The next time she sees Victor she speaks to him positively of the New Economic Policy reforms (57). She also shows an early willingness to accept revolutionary bromides, if they seem to serve her advantage. In her first meeting with Andrei she blurts out that she was glad her daughter will get to hear "a real proletarian opera in one of our grand Red theatres" (96). She later protects herself by assimilating into the Soviet system. She teaches sewing to children while mouthing slogans that preach the value of work in creating a new future (163).

At first Galina repeats these slogans without any implication that she believes them, as a pragmatic means to self-protection but also to express her concern for material wealth. Repetition and practice eventually strengthen these slogans in her mind; she begins to use them automatically as means to cope with the world. She eventually changes her mind about Alexander's working for the Soviets, pressuring him to take a state job and belittling him when his job is not as important as her own (272). The earlier implication that she does not think he is "practical" has become full-fledged contempt for his inability to advance in the world of the Soviets; in accepting the ideals of revolution she rejects her own husband and the values they once shared. By dint of repetition she replaces the ineffectual traditional and religious symbols in her mind with bromides that can rise up in her with genuine fervor when she needs them.

Lydia avoids a turn to communism by continually reinforcing her religious ideas and practices, specifically her prayers and her focus on icons. But Galina openly invites the proletarian revolution into her mind. Eventually she will blame Kira's supposed unhappiness on Kira's inability to appreciate what the Communists have done for her. Ayn Rand again places Kira's family side by side, and their responses reveal their core premises:

> "Still thinking of your engineering, aren't you?" asked Lydia.
>
> "Sometimes . . ." Kira whispered.
>
> "I can't understand what's wrong with you, Kira," Galina Petrovna boomed. "You're never satisfied. You have a perfectly good job, easy and well-paid, and you mope over some childish idea of yours. Excursion guides, like pedagogues, are considered no less important than engineers, these days. It is quite an honorary and responsible position, and contributes a great deal to social construction—and isn't it more fascinating to build with living minds and ideologies rather than with bricks and steel?"
>
> "It's your own fault, Kira," said Lydia. "You'll always be unhappy since you refuse the consolation of faith."
>
> "What's the use, Kira?" said Alexander Dimitrievitch.
>
> "Who said anything about being unhappy?" Kira asked loudly . . .
>
> "Kira has always been unmanageable," said Galina Petrovna, "but one would think that these are the times to make one come down to earth."
>
> (273)

The contrast between Lydia's faith in traditional religion and Galina's faith in working for the state is heightened by the claims each makes to attain the "consolation of faith" and to "come down to earth." What follows is an elaboration of these premises: Lydia relates an omen that includes a vision of a tree that appears as a white chalice, while Galina speaks glowingly of her Communist nephew Victor's "practical" abilities in "modern reality."

Galina's slogans and Lydia's prayers reach their logical ends in the final scenes between Kira, Lydia, and Galina. In preparation for a play her Club is putting on, Galina speaks feverishly by telephone to a comrade, "Now when we present Lord Chamberlain crushing the British Proletariat . . ." (446). The concern in her soul to be "practical" and "accommodating" has reduced her life to impassioned espousal of party propaganda and feverish running between meetings and club events. Her physical actions now center on party activities as her thoughts center on revolutionary bromides. Given her private chiding of Kira, it has become apparent that she sincerely believes that working for the party can bring some measure of prosperity and happiness: "There is a chance for everyone in this new country of ours" (448). In contrast, Lydia tells Kira that she has been to see a holy man who will redeem Russia through suffering and patience (445-47). On the face of it, Galina has rejected the spiritual in favor of the material; Lydia has deserted the material for the spiritual. Each woman moves toward the world of her ideals.

Galina's pragmatic materialism may seem to differ fundamentally from Lydia's religious idealism. But at a deeper level the motivations of Galina and Lydia are closely related. This similarity is in one sense implied by their common rejection of Kira's values. But also, despite Communism's materialism and atheism, the ease with which the tradition-minded Galina accepted Communist ideals suggests that the differences between

the two women are not fundamental. At age fifteen Lydia had fallen in love with St. Francis of Assisi, a medieval ascetic who "talked to the birds and helped the poor, and she dreamed of entering a convent" (49). He pursued poverty now with the promise of heaven later. Lydia accepts that impoverished work on behalf of the poor is necessary to complete the promise of redemption. Failure is due to self-interested sinners. Galina has rather come to believe that communism's promises can be fulfilled by slavish work in service to poverty in Russia, and that failure is due to self-interested anti-revolutionary speculators. Lydia accepts that virtue is found in the poor; Galina claims it by serving the proletariat. Lydia glorifies ascetic holy men; Galina glorifies poor farmers. Lydia's faith is in impending salvation from God; Galina awaits it from the proletarian revolution.

Ultimately Lydia and Galina embody the same basic premises. Service to the proletariat and service to paupers are both, after all, service to the poor; hatred of self-interested speculators and hatred of self-interested sinners are both hatred of self-interest; and faith in the proletarian revolution and faith in God are both faith. That communism promises prosperity on earth for the grandchildren of the poor while religion promises otherworldly heaven for today's needy is a difference in degree, not in kind. Christianity promised that the meek shall inherit the earth; the *Internationale* says that those who were nothing shall be all (73), as Andrei told starving Kira that "every little figure will grow" (189). Orthodox religion and Marxism share complementary views of material wealth, human action, and the future. In ***We the Living,*** the alleged conflict between religion and communism is shown to be a shadow war between allies who share the same fundamental ideals and are united against the same enemies.

We the Living's views of communism and religion, as presented in Galina and Lydia, can be understood characterologically in terms of a hierarchy of premises. On a superficial level, the two women agree that the present world is deeply flawed; they are conservatives who oppose today's decadence in the name of traditional morals. Consequently they reject Kira and her "Pagan" values. On a deeper level, they disagree about what to do about that decadence; Marxism and religion demand different slogans and see different sources of redemption. They disagree about what Kira should give up her values *for.* However, on an even deeper level, Marxism and religion share the same basic premises: faith (the Marxists' claim to being scientific notwithstanding), virtue through unending poverty and toil, and hatred of success. It is no accident that both women disagree with Kira's approach to life and her values.

The rituals and incantations of communism and religion also serve similar purposes in each woman's mind. Like everyone, Galina and Lydia need some way to understand their world, and to guide their own actions in that world. Their slogans provide points of focus that serve the function of ethical principles. Each claims that loyalty to these slogans is the only path to the salvation that the people of ***We the Living*** desperately need but cannot attain. These promises are projections into the future, purported to be attained through faith and sacrifice today. And as Galina and Lydia repetitiously chant these slogans they deepen the impact of these ideas on their minds. This ensures that the ideals of the Party or the Church will come to mind when either woman needs guidance.

It is clear that material misery is only the first level of impact that the totalitarian system has on its victims. There are ethical and cognitive consequences as well. Ethically, both Galina and Lydia accept that salvation can only come by valuing a good that is greater than themselves; cognitively, each has come to believe that only the ideology she has accepted is valid. ***We the Living's*** real message pertains not to particular economic or political flaws in communist practice, but rather to the nature of collectivism's attack on the spirit and the mind of an independent man. These attacks have deadly consequences. The victims of tyranny are forced to shrink the range of their aspirations and their thinking, renouncing hopes of personal long-range achievement in order to focus on the immediate, tedious needs of survival. Ethically they must abandon every value that exists apart from attaining a meal today and serving the party tonight. Cognitively, they must abandon every thought that exists apart from the content of today's meal and tonight's speech.

This has pronounced effects on men like Kira's father, Alexander Dimitrievitch, and her uncle, Vasili Ivanovitch Dunaev. Vasili is a fur trader of tremendous energy; "His muscles and the long hours of the Siberian nights had paid for every hair of every fur that passed through his hands" (34). Alexander is a textile manufacturer of similar energy and achievement. Each man has seen his self-made accomplishments taken by the Soviets. Each refuses to work for them, although Alexander eventually relents. Each is forced to look downwards from thoughts of long-range success onto mere physical survival for the immediate moment. Neither can quite grasp that his downcast eyes mark the success of the revolution.

Alexander's reaction to Communist Petrograd is profound resignation; "What's the use?" is his unchanging motto from start to finish. He renounces all hope for the

future and consigns himself to mere survival in the present. He acknowledges that his situation is futile not because of any conscious refusal to face reality, but rather because of his justified conclusion that thought and action are pointless in the society of the communists. When Kira and her family arrive at their new apartment, Galina says that a little work will fix it and Lydia calls out the Lord's name. But Alexander's sigh encapsulates his view that nothing can restore their prosperity.

Alexander is entirely cut off from any values; he can work, but can attain nothing from that work beyond bare survival. He tries to live in the only way he can: by starting one small-scale business after another, turning to a low-level Soviet job only under pressure from his wife and the threat of starvation. Neither the church nor the state made his success possible; he knows that neither the church nor the party will save him and his family. In the present world he has no chance of success; that world belongs to the so-called "Nepmen" like Karp Karpovitch Morozov, dishonest speculators who get rich under Lenin's New Economic Policy. Such men were beyond his comprehension; "Alexander wondered dully about their secrets. But the dreaded word 'speculator' gave him a cold shudder; he lacked the talents of a racketeer" (92). As events progress his estrangement from the world grows deeper; his "feeble shadow of a smile" may have indicated happiness at a visit from Kira, "had it not been for a dull haze grown between him and the life around him" (163).

Separated from his values, in a world not of his making, with every thought frustrated by threat of expropriation and every effort crushed by hostile social conditions, he is trapped between the energy of his own spirit and the decrees of the Communists. His motivations to give up are conscious in the sense that he knows he will never be allowed to succeed; he does not pretend that he can. Yet he is also motivated subconsciously by a profound virtue that he has cultivated for years, has never named, and now must stifle: his productive ability. His desire to live and to act thwarts his attempts to give up. Unable to act in any meaningful way, but also unable to remain idle, he is torn on a rack between his own virtue and the tyrants over him. By the time Galina takes a job, the best energy he can muster is to concoct imitation milk for a cat he found in a gutter (163). In the end the only values he has left are a pair of galoshes, which he wipes off carefully after using them, and a jealously guarded collection of matchbox labels that he attaches to a wooden frame (445). It is his inalienable need for values that motivates him to guard these particular things as he does.

Alexander, like every character, illustrates the importance of politics. He is a productive entrepreneur who is doomed to extinction in a culture of cannibals. In America he would have created a business empire. In Soviet Russia he can produce nothing, feel nothing, think nothing.

In contrast to Alexander, Kira's uncle Vasili Ilyitch Dunaev clings tenaciously to his vision of the future. He consciously renounces his most sacred values by disavowing the past: "Take one advice from an old man, Kira. Don't ever look back. The past is dead. But there is always a future. There is always a future" (78). Yet, denials notwithstanding, he continues to hold a profound respect for the values of the past. After selling a priceless clock he had given to his wife for her birthday, he gives a million rubles to a disabled Imperial Army veteran: "Keep it. And I'll still be your debtor" (87).

Grasping at the values of the past, he is unable to see that everything once dear to him is now worthless. The clock he sold was once so valuable that its sale required an Imperial order; it is now worth a few pounds of bread. The same is true for illegal Czarist money, which he hoards. He intends to use it to pay a foreign debt, as well as to regain his possessions. His honor demands that the debt be paid, and he looks forward with a sense of achievement to paying it off (78). Although both his debt and his possessions are from the past, he is actually projecting his need for achievement into an otherwise barren future. He is looking *forward* to these achievements. But the implications of the Czarist money are clear to Kira as well as to the reader: the values of the past are worthless in the world of the Communists, to hold onto them in the present is a capital crime, and the future he desires—a return to a pre-Soviet era of decency and values—will not come to be. Despite his conscious protestations to the contrary, Vasili clings to those values at the risk of his life. And, like all such values, they must remain hidden, as Galina had taken pains to hide the French novel she read on the train from the Crimea (21).

Yet Vasili's hopes are not centered primarily on material values. Like Galina and Lydia, his past has moral import; he reads Chekhov, and when he hears of a new production of *La Traviata* he says, "Yes . . . old classics are still the best. In those days they had culture, and moral values, and . . . integrity" (214). Doubtless Czarist culture was not the nirvana that he remembers, but his very need for an alternative to the crushing staleness around him strengthens the effects of those memories on him.

Trapped in a miserable present that is cut off from the past, he places all his hopes on a future that he can conceive of only in terms of the values of the past. Unable

to think that the values he craves have been exterminated everywhere, he projects them onto nations abroad, imagining a world where people live as human beings and not as animals. In response to what he thinks is a benevolent action from abroad, he says to his family:

> But that's Europe for you. That's abroad. That's what a human life does to a human being. I think it's hard for us to understand kindness and what used to be called ethics. We're all turning into beasts in a beastly struggle. But we'll be saved. We'll be saved before it gets us all.
>
> (257)

But his wife had long ceased hearing this; Vasili had predicted salvation from abroad for five years (77). But there is no indication that such a failure was lessening his faith in the intervention of nations from abroad.

His faith in the future is also drawn from his hopes for his children, a faith that is also not lessened by failures. Early on, when Kira meets him in the market, he says:

> "You know, this is not a cheerful place. I feel so sorry for all the people here, selling the last of their possessions, with nothing to expect of life. For me it's different. I don't mind. What's a few knick-knacks more or less? I'll have time to buy plenty of new ones. But I have something I can't sell and can't lose and it can't be nationalized. I have a future. A living future. My children. You know, Irina—she's the smartest child. She was always first in school; had she graduated in the old days she would have received a gold medal. And Victor?" The old shoulders straightened vigorously like those of a soldier at attention. "Victor is an unusual young man. Victor's the brightest boy I've ever seen. Sure, we disagree a little sometimes, but that's because he's young, he doesn't quite understand. You mark my word: Victor will be a great man someday."
>
> "And Irina will be a famous artist, Uncle Vasili."
>
> "And Kira, did you read the papers this morning? Just watch England. Within the next month or two. . . ."
>
> (85-86)

These claims for the future suffer a serious blow when Irina is expelled from school. But the deadly threat to Vasili is rather that Victor has not been expelled from school, and has joined the Communist Party. Galina thinks that Victor is smart and adaptable, but Vasili knows that he is losing his son (214). He cannot foresee that his future will be demolished by Victor's betrayal and Irina's sentence to Siberia, but he recognizes early the implications of Victor's sell-out to the Communist Party. Consequently, when Irina is condemned, Vasili has no uncertainty about Victor's complicity in her arrest. Her protestations notwithstanding, in this issue it is Vasili who is "practical" and Galina who is an "idealist." Victor and Irina illustrate two possible ways that a father can lose his children: physical death by rejecting the party and spiritual death by joining it. Victor and Irina embody, in a microcosm, the basic alternative facing many of the minor characters in ***We the Living.***

In his final goodbye to Kira, standing on the street, Vasili grasps onto all that is left of his future, his child Acia:

> "It's such a joy to watch her growing, day by day. She's getting better at school, too. I help her with her lessons. I don't mind standing here all day, because then I go home, and there she is. Everything isn't lost, yet. I still have Acia's future before me. Acia is a bright child. She'll go far."
>
> "Yes, Uncle Vasili."
>
> "I read the papers, too, when I have time. There's a lot going on in the world. One can wait, if one has faith and patience."
>
> (450-51)

Vasili is torn by internal as well as external conflicts. From the outset he is aware of the consequences of consorting with the Communists, and he steadfastly refuses to work for them. This is evidence for his integrity, his refusal to act in any way contrary to what he knows to be right. Alexander had vowed, with sudden strength, "Not as long as I live" when Maria suggested that he take a Soviet job (37), but he did not keep this vow. Vasili, however, did hold true to this commitment, making the same statement much later to Victor: "I will not work for your government so long as I live" (312). But Vasili also must realize that Irina and Victor are gone, that his wife has died, that Acia is absorbing pure propaganda at school (and that she is a brat), and that the outside world is little interested in Russia. Yet he continues to claim that the future will improve. The conclusion is unavoidable: he is consciously evading the nature of his situation. He is refusing to admit that there is no hope for the future. His is a faith in the future that is immune to the facts.

At each step Kira is aware that her uncle's hopes are impossible, yet she treats him gently; she does not dispute that Victor and Irina will succeed, and she later agrees that Acia has a bright future. Vasili deserves this gentle treatment. He stands on the edge of a chasm that he cannot traverse. The present is misery. Like Alexander's, his material values have been reduced to pittances, and have become actual dangers to his life. He too is trapped between his own unacknowledged virtues and the demands of the collectivist state. The moral values he craves are out of reach. He is an achievement-oriented man who is unable to pursue any goals and yet unable to give up. He creates a future because he must; without a future he will have to admit that no values are possible and that he cannot live. Vasili's faith in Acia (and in England) has been created for the same reason as Galina's faith in communism and Lydia's

faith in religion—and it is just as hopeless. Although Vasili's error emerges from a more steadfast devotion to the values necessary for human life, his demise is inevitable once Acia follows either Irina or Victor to her logical end. But he is simply unable to abandon his grasp on life by giving up on his one remaining child and the world outside Russia.

To be cut off from all values is to be cut off from all goals. No thinking and no plans are possible if one's values can be destroyed at any time. Vasili knows this from the first. When Alexander says, early in the novel, that he will open a store, Vasili disagrees with Victor over what this means:

> "New enterprises, Uncle Alexander, have a great future in this new age," said Victor.
>
> "Until the government squashes them under its heel," Vasili Ivanovitch said gloomily.
>
> "Nothing to fear, Father. The days of confiscations are past. The Soviet government has a most progressive policy outlined."
>
> "Outlined in blood," said Vasili Ivanovitch.
>
> (38-39)

Ayn Rand is systematic when presenting the basic ways that the victims grasp at the values needed for life. Lydia oscillates between her worship of religious icons and the classical composers she plays violently at the piano. Alexander has narrowed his vision to small-scale, particular things; he feeds his cat, wipes his galoshes, and guards his matchbox labels jealously. Galina, embracing the new ideology, screams party propaganda to get a pound of millet. Vasili holds onto hopes for his daughter's future. Kira, always trying to protect her highest value, does whatever is necessary to save Leo's life. Like every member of every overflow audience at every foreign film in ***We the Living,*** Kira and her family act desperately to hold on to the values that make life as a human being possible. Each is trapped between the selfish needs of life and the sacrificial demands of the party. And in each, the desire to live is facing a relentless onslaught. Only Kira is strong enough to withstand the attack on her spirit. It takes a bullet to bring her down.

Ayn Rand is also systematic when she shows how Kira's family members move psychologically and physically toward inevitable destruction. Alexander gives up all expectations of improvement and simply exists, without hope or promise. Galina turns to a feverish faith in the revolution. Lydia strengthens her faith in God. Vasili affirms his faith in his children and the outside world. Irina, beginning to understand, disappears in prison. Maria dies from disease, crying out her desire to live. Victor sells his soul to the party by betraying a family member. Kira dies trying to escape. Through such systematic characterizations, Ayn Rand creates the society in which Kira, Andrei, and Leo play out their passionate tragedy, each coming to the end that he must.

There are deeper implications to the tragedies in ***We the Living.*** These implications reach far beyond the events of the book, to include the nature of tyranny and its foundations in the moral nature of a collectivist society. The portrayal of collectivist social conditions is one of Ayn Rand's central concerns. She wrote in her ***Journals*** [***Journals of Ayn Rand***] that "The Picture" in ***We the Living*** is "a terrific machinery crushing the whole country and smothering every bit of action, life and air." This picture is created through (1) "Economic Conditions" of "terrific poverty," including hunger, cold, disease, lice; (2) "Mental Conditions" with "everything centered around one idea—one propaganda—and that idea fed to the people until they suffocate"; and (3) "Moral Conditions" where "men turn into cornered animals."[3] There are powerful economic, mental, and moral implications of the thoughts and actions of Kira's family, and of the conditions under which they live.

The characters of Galina, Alexander, Lydia, and Vasili are vital to creating these social conditions and to showing their consequences. As members of the educated classes, and with a high degree of material well-being, they stand apart from the party insiders and the dirt-poor peasants in the countryside. As formerly successful businessmen and their families, they illustrate how the well-to-do are the targets of special economic vituperation by the party and the masses it claims to represent. Kira's family members also illustrate the effects of revolutionary propaganda on the minds of people who have some degree of education. The moral conditions that result are precisely those of cornered animals, most vividly illustrated by Victor's betrayal of Irina.

In ***We the Living,*** any attempt to pursue life-affirming values becomes a potential death sentence. On the physical level, any implication that a person or a member of his family has ever attained material wealth is reason for expulsion from school, dismissal from employment, an arbitrary tax levy, and brute physical labor. Kira and her family are made special targets of party animosity precisely because of the ambitious achievements of Vasili and Alexander. The moratorium on ambition elevates unscrupulous speculators into positions of unearned wealth while pushing productive individuals down into mindless physical labor.

But the hatred of success by tyrants is an old story that serves a special purpose. Aristotle, a philosopher much admired by Ayn Rand, understood the special antipathy of tyrants toward any men of ability. He wrote that "tyrants have mostly begun as demagogues, being trusted because they abused the well-to-do." But the well-to-do are also a source of special danger for the tyrant, and a

tyrant must control them most of all. To keep men from plotting, Aristotle continues, "It is in the interest of the tyrant to keep his subjects poor, so that the tyrant may be able to afford the cost of a bodyguard, while the people are so occupied with their daily tasks that they have no time for plotting." Aristotle observes that public monuments such as the pyramids of Egypt were intended to siphon the energy of the population away from independent activities.[4]

Likewise, in ***We the Living*** the activities of the party are not intended to attain prosperity through a "proletarian victory," but rather to ensure that such a victory does not occur. It is a matter of self-protection for the party to require that everyone be absorbed in a daily struggle to survive. Prosperity is not possible under such conditions, since the basic requirement of prosperity—thinking—is precisely what is proscribed. But if material abundance did somehow fall out of the sky (or an international aid truck) the party would have to end it. Prosperity in any terms would provide people with the free time needed to think, the greatest enemy of the dictator. This must be avoided at all costs. The destruction of Kira's family does not represent the failure of the communist plan, but rather its success. Among the symbols of that success are the treacherous Victor mounting the speaker's platform to assume his place at the top—while Kira bends over a stinking kerosene stove, cooking moldy cabbage, soon to die in the snow.

But physical activity is only the first level of the totalitarian attack. The party's destruction of human life goes far deeper than proscribing certain actions or confiscating property. A corollary to these miserable economic conditions is the airtight mental conditions. To hold its power the party must make it impossible for anyone to develop a long-range, *conceptual* plan of action apart from party ideology. The rulers want to destroy every man's ability to *act* beyond the range of the moment by making it impossible to *think* meaningfully into the future. This attack is cognitive. The target is the conceptual mind. To control human action, the party must control human thoughts. To understand how the party does this, it is necessary to understand the relationship between perceptual awareness and conceptual understanding in Ayn Rand's later philosophy.

According to her theory, human consciousness operates on several levels. It begins on the level of immediate perception, which is seeing that which is immediately in front of our eyes. Human beings share this ability with higher animals, such as cows, who also perceive what is before them, such as grass (although they have no concepts such as "grass," "food," etc.). A cow, if hungry, can move forward to eat the grass, but he cannot plan this action or consider its implications.

But man has a higher level of awareness: he has a conceptual faculty that allows him to understand abstract issues, to think about his physical and psychological values, and to undertake long-range actions to achieve those values. He knows not only grass but also organic chemistry. He builds food-processing plants and operates computer-controlled distribution systems. Man's conceptual ability alone allows him to think into the future, to aspire and to imagine, and to create an industrial civilization. It also allows him to understand, and evaluate, his political systems, and to act against them if they contradict his values.

Such thinking is dangerous to tyrants. Thinking minds are free minds, and free minds think for themselves, forming difficult questions that require subversive answers. To counter this threat, the Soviets need to create a new man, a being who functions not with a rational capacity for abstract thought, but rather with the immediate perception of an animal. As long as a person is forced to focus on the next meal, the way a cow looks for grass, he will be unable to plot against the brutes that have turned his country into a slaughterhouse. To the extent that Kira must think about cooking food for Leo, she cannot think about engineering formulas, soaring bridges, or shivering theatre curtains. As long as Alexander has to struggle to obtain his ration of bread, he will not be able to think about establishing an independent business. As long as Vasili can take no meaningful action beyond selling family possessions, his thoughts cannot rise above simple faith in his children. Collectivism destroys the men of independent spirit and independent wealth, on every level of intellectual achievement, by striving to reduce the range of their minds to a daily struggle for life, focused on that which is immediately before their eyes.

If the totalitarians could do so, they would empty every person's mind and turn him into a materialistic robot. But man cannot function in this way. He must have some central focus, some means to connect disparate thoughts into a conceptual system and some means to guide his actions by principles. Nature abhors a vacuum, in physical reality and in the mind. So the leaders must create an ideology to replace what was once in their victim's minds, so that each person never turns his thoughts away from this ideology. As there must be no empty spaces in the physical activities of daily life, so there must be no room for thinking in the minds of the people.

We the Living demonstrates that such propaganda is dangerous to those who are not actively aware of it. Galina is a perfect example of a woman who allows this propaganda to take over her soul, and Acia is the young person who is placed into a situation where there is no alternative to this propaganda. There is an ominous portent of Alexander's changing state of mind; when Galina propagandizes about this being "a transitional period of . . ." Alexander yells out "State con-

struction!" He then weakly speaks of his new Soviet job, as if defending himself from an accusation (273). His weakness contrasts with his earlier strength in denying that he will ever work for the Soviets.

Irina understands the intentions of this propaganda, telling Kira:

> "Kira, I . . . I'm so afraid . . . I don't know why, it's only at times, but I'm so afraid . . . You know, we're all trying so hard no to think at all, not to think beyond the next day, and sometimes even not beyond the next hour . . . Do you know what I believe? I believe *they're* doing it deliberately. *They* don't want us to think. That's why we have to work as we do."
>
> (327)

That's why, Irina comes to understand, they have to memorize the names of innumerable people's oil wells, recite mountains of newspaper articles, and give endless speeches to political clubs. As the party cannot demand that the people *do* nothing, so the party cannot demand that their minds remain completely empty. In both the physical and intellectual aspects of human life, the party must provide a substitute that commands a person's primary attention and that accepts no competitors for that attention. Ultimately, it is because man is a conceptual being that the party must provide propaganda for his mind to focus on. Similarly, it is because man is a being with material values that the party must force him to struggle for immediate survival, without thought of long-range achievement.

Ayn Rand understood that life in a truly human sense is a progression of purposeful activity toward the achievement of life-affirming values. "Happiness is that state of consciousness which proceeds from the achievement of one's values."[5] To destroy a person's ability to choose and achieve values is to leave him nothing to act *for*, no reason to strive, no chance to be happy. It is to divorce his actions from results and to demand that he act without purpose. The collectivist tyranny in ***We the Living*** is a vicious attack on any attempt to achieve any personal values. Every member of Kira's family has to deal with the realization that no individual achievement is possible, and that struggle without requite is to be their lot. The terms by which Kira's family are murdered can be found in the severance of individual thought and action from the achievement of values.

The political and social system of ***We the Living*** is important to Kira's family; it demands their misery. Kira's family constitutes an aspect of the society that the party must dominate. The tyrants maintain their power not only through their overt supporters like Victor and Galina, but also through people such as Lydia, who accept the fundamentals of the tyrant's ideals even if they differ outwardly with the practice. For the present misery Lydia blames the sins of Russia, and Galina blames private speculators. In either case, the remedy is to blot out all selfish claims to flourishing, and to accept as virtuous an impoverished slavery that everyone secretly fears is its own end. Both sides reject Kira, the woman who demands the right to live for her own sake. Similarly, religious conservatives and Marxist liberals today reject Ayn Rand with equal vehemence, because they reject any claim that a man has a moral right to live selfishly, for his own sake. But affirmation of that right is the central value that Kira, Alexander, Galina, and Lydia cry out for, as Kira's dying aunt Maria cried "I want to live!"

Notes

1. Ayn Rand, *The Art of Fiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers,* Tore Boeckmann, ed. (New York: Plume, 2000), 67.
2. In her journals Ayn Rand described Vasili, Lydia, and Alexander in terms of "the dying old world" or "the old world." See David Harriman, ed., *Journals of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1997), 59-60.
3. Harriman, *Journals,* 56-57.
4. Aristotle, *Politics,* 5.11.
5. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Random House, 1957; Signet thirty-fifth anniversary paperback edition, 1992), 940.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Unless otherwise indicated, quotes from Ayn Rand's *We the Living* will be followed by page number(s) in parentheses in the text and not by an endnote. Pagination refers to the sixtieth anniversary paperback edition (New York: Signet, 1996).

Robert Mayhew (essay date 2004)

SOURCE: Mayhew, Robert. "Kira Argounova Laughed: Humor and Joy in *We the Living.*" In *Essays on Ayn Rand's* We the Living, edited by Robert Mayhew, pp. 303-15. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004.

[*In the following essay, Mayhew assesses the role of humor in Rand's* We the Living, *which he describes as*

the author's only work of "tragedy," asserting that its purpose is not simply to poke fun at the incompetence of the Soviet figures in the novel, but to serve "as a reminder of Rand's conviction that the universe is benevolent."]

Most people familiar with Ayn Rand's fiction came to it through her two most popular novels, ***The Fountainhead*** and ***Atlas Shrugged.*** Evident in both is what Rand calls the benevolent universe premise—the conviction that we live in a world in which people can prosper and achieve their values, and where evil is ultimately impotent.[1] Both novels are serious in tone, and both have tragic characters; but neither is a tragedy. Thus, some readers are surprised when they turn to ***We the Living,*** Rand's first novel and sole tragedy.[2] For instance, in the mid-seventies, Rand was asked: "If the universe is benevolent, why does Kira die at the end of ***We the Living,*** just as she's about to escape?"[3] (I give her answer later.)

So, why would an author who maintains that the universe is benevolent write a tragedy? Is there evidence of this benevolent universe outlook in ***We the Living***? And on a connected point, what role does the humor in ***We the Living*** play?

Humor in *We the Living*

"Humor," Ayn Rand says, "is the denial of metaphysical importance to that which you laugh at."[4] It is the denial of that which contradicts what she calls one's "metaphysical value-judgments"—one's appraisal of reality and man's relationship to it.[5] Laughter comes (at least in part) from the awareness of that which does not fit your view of reality. If one is rational and moral, she argues, one will laugh at what is evil, absurd, or inconsequential; if one is irrational or immoral, one will laugh at what is good and rational.[6]

According to Rand, humor should not be a major issue or play a major role in a person's life. It is, she says, like sports and good food: they are enjoyable—"they are the spice"—but they should not be a person's primary concern. One's own life—and particularly one's career—should be one's primary concern. There is something wrong, in her view, with a person who hates his job, lacks ambition, and so lives for eating good food or watching football on Sundays or telling jokes around the water cooler.[7]

Ayn Rand maintains that just as humor should not play a major role in life, so it does not play such a role in her novels or in the lives of the heroes in them. The tone of her novels is serious.[8] To be sure, there are humorous touches in all of her novels (and especially in ***The Fountainhead***), but consistent with her account of humor, most of them are directed at the evil, the incompetent, and/or the inconsequential. Nevertheless, why include humor in a *tragedy*?

To better understand the purpose of the humorous touches in ***We the Living,*** let's consider some representative samples of humor involving Comrade Sonia, Communist clichés, and Red art.

Comrade Sonia is arguably the most evil character in ***We the Living.*** (In notes for the novel, Ayn Rand describes her as "'the new woman,' mob womanhood at its most dangerous."[9]) Sonia is presented as evil and dangerous, but she is also presented humorously. For example, she is first described as follows:

> The young woman had broad shoulders and a masculine leather jacket; short, husky legs and flat, masculine oxfords; a red kerchief tied carelessly over short, straight hair; eyes wide apart in a round, freckled face; thin lips drawn together with so obvious and fierce a determination that they seemed weak; dandruff on the black leather of her shoulders.
>
> (69)

Later, she is said to waddle (95). Touches such as this and the dandruff are humorous and undercutting.

At one point, she says to Kira: "Well, bye-bye. Have to run. Have three meetings at four o'clock—and promised to attend them all!" (88). In a particularly comic scene, Sonia (who is pregnant) and Pavel Syerov discuss what to name their child. She suggests 'Ninel,' if it's a boy. "What the hell's that?" asks Syerov. Sonia replies: "Ninel is our great leader Lenin's name—reversed. . . . Or we could call him Vil—that's for our great leader's initials—Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin. See?" She suggests, in the case of a girl, Octiabrina (after the October Revolution), Marxina, Communara, Tribuna, Barricada, or Universiteta. She then asks: "What do you want it to be, Pavel, a boy or a girl?" "I don't care," he replies, "so long as it isn't twins" (410-11).[10]

Soviet citizens were free to choose the names of their children, but not the ideas they mouthed or were expected to hold. They had a number of communist clichés stuffed down their throats, providing them with all the ideas they needed to "survive." Kira's cousin Victor is full of them. Early in the novel, his visits to the Argounov family are strewn with clichés. To Lydia, he says: "short skirts are the height of feminine elegance and feminine elegance is the highest of the Arts" (39). He tells Kira: "A typewriter's keys are the stepping stones to any high office" (41); and, "Society . . . is a stupendous whole" (42). To Galina Petrovna, he says: "A man of culture . . . has to be, above all, a man attuned to his century" (56). Later in the novel, he tells Lydia (who has heard this on several occasions, she tells us): "Diplomacy is the highest of the Arts" (115). At Vava's party, he rattles off a number of clichés, for example: "My career is my duty to society" (154, see also 152).

Victor is not the only one who utters such clichés. The government official filling out Kira's Soviet passport says: "The trade unions are the steel girders of our great state building, as said . . . well, one of our great leaders said" (49). And we are told that Comrade Bituik *constantly* reminded the people who worked under her (including Kira) that the House of the Peasant was "the heart of a gigantic net whose veins poured the beneficial light of the new Proletarian Culture into the darkest corners of our farthest villages" (194).

Later, after Kira's mother (Galina Petrovna) has warmed to the new political system, she speaks of the Soviet Union enthusiastically:

> "It's not like in the dying, decadent cities of Europe where people slave all their lives for measly wages and a pitiful little existence. Here—each one of us has an opportunity to be a useful, creative member of a stupendous whole. Here—one's work is not merely a wasted effort to satisfy one's petty hunger, but a contribution to the gigantic building of humanity's future."
>
> "Mother," Kira asked, "who wrote all that down for you?"
>
> (270)

Galina goes on to praise the Soviet system of education, at which point her other daughter "Lydia's head drooped listlessly; she had heard it all many times." Galina has only one complaint:

> "Of course, our distribution of commodities has not as yet reached a level of perfection and, really, the sunflower-seed oil I got last week was so rancid we couldn't use it . . . but then, this is a transitional period of . . ."
>
> ". . . State Construction!" Alexander Dimitrievitch [Kira's father] yelled suddenly, hastily, as a well-memorized lesson.
>
> (271)

Like the other examples involving communist clichés, this scene is meant to be a little humorous (however pathetic).

In ***We the Living,*** Ayn Rand regularly subjects Red art to a comic critique. Here is her parody of anticapitalist propaganda novels:

> They were novels . . . in which a poor, honest worker was always sent to jail for stealing a loaf of bread to feed the starving mother of his pretty, young wife who had been raped by a capitalist and committed suicide thereafter, for which the all-powerful capitalist fired her husband from the factory, so that their child had to beg on the streets and was run over by the capitalist's limousine with sparking fenders and a chauffer in uniform.
>
> (136-37)[11]

The odd structure of this passage captures the relentless, droning-on, anti-capitalist tone of the propaganda, as well as the episodic (and thus inept) structure of these works—and it enables Rand to convey this economically.

Later, Rand gives us a glimpse of some of the other forms of art Leo and Kira encountered.

Magazine stories:

> Masha looked at him coldly. "I fear that our ideologies are too far apart. We are born into different social classes. The bourgeois prejudices are too deep-rooted in your consciousness. I am a daughter of the toiling masses. Individual love is a bourgeois prejudice." "Is this the end, Masha?" he asked hoarsely, a deathly pallor spreading on his handsome, but bourgeois face.
>
> (174)

Poetry:

> "My heart is a tractor raking the soil,
> My soul is smoke from the factory oil . . ."
>
> (174)[12]

Movies: *The Golden Octopus,* directed by Reginald Moore, censored by Comrade M. Zavadkov. This foreign movie is cut to pieces, and different foreign titles and even some scenes are inserted. For example: "On the screen, a man was bending over the hand of a delicate lady, pressing it slowly to his lips, while she looked at him sadly, and gently stroked his hair." The accompanying title reads: "I hate you. You are a bloodsucking capitalistic exploiter. Get out of my room!" (174-75). The film—the end of which was cut—concludes abruptly with this title: "Six months later the bloodthirsty capitalist met his death at the hands of striking workers. Our hero renounced the joys of a selfish love into which the bourgeois siren had tried to lure him, and he dedicated his life to the cause of the World Revolution" (175).

Finally, toward the end of the novel, Leo takes Tonia to a Red ballet: "On the glittering stage a chorus of fragile ballerinas in short, flame-red tulle skirts fluttered, waving thin, powered arms with gilded chains of papier-mâché, in a 'Dance of the Toilers'" (387).

Soviet art has all the originality and seriousness of Sonia's baby-names and Galina's political philosophy. As such, it makes excellent grist for the humor mill.

What do these humorous touches add to ***We the Living***—which is, after all, a tragedy? Obviously, they contribute to the critique of communism contained in the novel, by ridiculing it. But this cannot be the sole reason for their presence. After all, ***We the Living*** is much more effective as a critique of statism when its content and tone are serious. Ayn Rand did not believe that in tragedy or other serious fiction an author needed to provide comic relief—to give the reader a break, as it were.[13] So why the humor?

One way to discover why Rand sometimes employed humor in ***We the Living*** is to examine her discussion of how *not* to use humor to criticize communism. At one

point during her 1969 nonfiction writing course, she was asked: "You say that it is inappropriate to treat evil humorously, if one knows that it is an actual evil. In this connection, what is your view of the film *Ninotchka*?" She responded:

> *Ninotchka* is an excellent movie. It is brilliantly done, and yet, when I saw it for the first time, although I could admire it technically, it depressed me enormously. The reason was that the subject is not funny. If you remember the details, when Ninotchka returns to Russia [from Paris] and talks about her beautiful hat, her roommate asks, "Why didn't you bring it?" and she says "I'd be ashamed to wear it here." The roommate replies: "It was as beautiful as that?" Now the audience chuckles, but this is not funny. It is very eloquent, and typical of the Russian atmosphere. It is a good, realistic line, and for that very reason it is not the subject for humor. Moreover, I assume the author was anticommunist, because ideologically the film is anticommunist. Yet observe: by the mere fact of treating [communism] humorously, he leaves you with a certain element of sympathy—with the idea that the evil is unreal. . . . It makes you feel: "Oh, well, yes, Russia; that's *Ninotchka*"—a kind of good-natured disapproval. It makes you feel that these Russians are naughty, when in fact they are evil. In that sense, *Ninotchka* is an inappropriate film—morally inappropriate. Artistically, it was very well done. But in order to enjoy it, you really have to evade (at least for the duration of the film) the nature of the background. The same would be true if you transposed *Ninotchka* to Nazi Germany. . . .[14]

Rand holds that it is okay to laugh at what is evil, "provided you take it seriously, but occasionally permit yourself to laugh at it."[15] *Ninotchka* does not take the evil of communism seriously, and then laugh at it—on the side, as it were. Rather, it treats communism humorously only—which undercuts or vitiates the film's critique of communism.

In ***We the Living,*** Rand launches a *serious* attack on communism—or rather, on statism and collectivism generally—and from time to time permits herself to laugh at it. I suggest that the humor in ***We the Living*** aimed at evil (at the villains, and the Soviet state generally) serves as a reminder of Rand's conviction that the universe is benevolent, and that in the end, the evil does not matter. Clearly, she believes we must take certain kinds of evil—here, statism—dead seriously. Not to do so creates the problems she identifies in *Ninotchka.* But we must not forget, even when fighting in earnest against the worst kinds of evil, that it is impotent: for example, that Comrade Sonia, however evil, is also ridiculous and ultimately insignificant; that Red art, however ubiquitous and propagandistic, cannot ultimately defeat the good.

Joyful Laughter in *We The Living*

Armed with the benevolent universe premise, one can use laughter to combat evil in two ways: one is negative—laughter directed at the evil (while taking it seriously), as was just examined; another is positive—laughter as a celebration of the good. According to Ayn Rand, humor—even the best, most benevolent humor—always involves a negation. When we laugh in response to the humorous, we are considering or focusing on the evil or the unimportant at least long enough to dismiss it with laughter. But there is a special kind of laughter, which transcends humor: laughter in response to a benevolent universe.

In ***We the Living,*** this benevolent sort of laughter is associated most of all with two young women. One is a minor character, the other is the novel's heroine. And though each meets a tragic end, both evoke and concretize this joyful laughter, which is virtually impossible to find outside of Ayn Rand's novels.

Irina Dunaeva

In her notes for ***We the Living,*** Ayn Rand describes Irina simply as "an average girl, caught by events."[16] But this does not do justice to the kind of "average" girl Irina is—Rand was clearly fond of her—or the horrific way in which she is "caught by events."

Irina is first described in the novel as "a young girl of eighteen with the eyes of twenty-eight and the laughter of eight" (34). She loved to draw, and we hear of her drawings early in the story:

> She sketched cartoons whenever she was supposed to, and at any other time. A drawing board on her lap, throwing her head and hair back once in a while for a swift glance at Acia through the smoke, she was sketching her little sister. On the paper, Acia was transformed into a goblin with huge ears and stomach, riding on the back of a snail.
>
> (76)

Acia wasn't the only relative Irina sketched pictures of: "Lydia disliked her cousin ever since Irina, following her custom of expressing her character judgments in sketches, had drawn Lydia in the shape of a mackerel" (115).

Later, we learn Irina has fallen in love with Sasha, a student with revolutionary, anticommunist ideas, and that he loves her. She tells Kira: "Sasha is studying history . . . , that is, he was. He's been thrown out of the University for trying to think in a country of free thought" (254).

Eventually, Irina and Sasha are arrested: Sasha for counterrevolutionary activities, Irina for hiding him. They get married in prison, but are nonetheless assigned to different labor camps. The last we see of them is in a train bound for Siberia. Sasha is dejected and miserable; Irina is a rock. She lifts Sasha's spirits, and remains beautifully benevolent in the face of horrible tragedy.

> Sasha sat up, erect, his face the color of brass, darker than his hair, and said, his voice changed, firm: "If they let us write to each other, Irina, will you . . . every day?"
>
> "Of course," she answered gaily.
>
> "Will you . . . draw things in your letters, too?"
>
> "With pleasure . . . Here," she picked a small splinter of coal from the window ledge, "here, I'll draw something for you, right now."
>
> With a few strokes, swift and sure as a surgeon's scalpel she sketched a face on the back of her seat, an imp's face that grinned at them with a wide, crescent mouth, with eyebrows flung up, with one eye winking mischievously, a silly, infectious, irresistible grin that one could not face without grinning in answer.
>
> "Here," said Irina, "he'll keep you company after . . . after the station. . . ."
>
> Sasha smiled, answering the imp's smile.
>
> (352-53)

A bit later, they are forced to separate, as Irina must take another train to her camp.

> The guard tore her away from him and pushed her out through the door. She leaned back for a second, for a last look at Sasha. She grinned at him, the homely, silly grin of her imp, her nose wrinkled, one eye winking mischievously. Then the door closed. The two trains started moving at once. Pressed tightly to the glass pane, Sasha could see the black outline of Irina's head in the yellow square of a window in the car on the next track. . . .
>
> Sasha lost sight of the window; but he could still see a string of yellow spots that still looked square, and above them something black moving against the sky, that looked like car roofs. Then there was only a string of yellow beads, dropping into a black well. Then, there was only the dusty glass pane with patent leather pasted behind it, and he was not sure whether he still saw a string of sparks somewhere or whether it was something burned into his unblinking, dilated eyes.
>
> Then there was only the imp left, on the back of the empty seat before him, grinning with a wide, crescent mouth, one eye winking.
>
> (353-54, ellipses added)

Irina's benevolence underscores the tragedy. This is not Ayn Rand's joyful laughter in the face of tragedy—rather, it is her way of saying (in a most heart-rending manner) that the capacity for joy that Irina represents is precisely what a dictatorship destroys. Nevertheless, as Rand gives the imp the last word (or look), this ending to the story of Irina and Sasha is also an affirmation of the benevolent universe premise in the face of grotesque cruelty, injustice, and tragedy.

Kira Argounova

In **"What is Romanticism?"** Ayn Rand writes the following of O. Henry, one of her favorite writers:

> O. Henry['s] . . . unique characteristic is the pyrotechnical virtuosity of an inexhaustible imagination projecting the gaiety of a benevolent, almost childlike sense of life. More than any other writer, O. Henry represents the spirit of youth—specifically, the cardinal element of youth: the expectation of finding something wonderfully unexpected around all of life's corners.[17]

This is an excellent description of Kira, when she arrives in St. Petersburg at the beginning of ***We the Living.***

> She had a calm mouth and slightly widened eyes with the defiant, enraptured, solemnly and fearfully expectant look of a warrior who is entering a strange city and is not quite sure whether he is entering it as a conqueror or a captive.
>
> (19)

> Kira . . . looked straight into [the young soldier's] eyes and smiled. She thought that he understood her, that he guessed the great adventure beginning for her.
>
> (30)

> "Well," said Alexander Dimitrievitch, "we're back." "Isn't it wonderful!" said Kira. "Mud, as ever," said Lydia. "We'll have to take a cab. Such an expense!" said Galina Petrovna.
>
> (31, paragraphing omitted)

> During the lectures, she smiled suddenly, once in a while, at no one in particular; smiled at a dim, wordless thought of her own. She felt as if her ended childhood had been a cold shower, gay, hard and invigorating, and now she was entering her morning, with her work before her, with so much to be done.
>
> (55)

We are told early on that "because she worshipped joy, Kira seldom laughed" (50). But this must be relative to other people in Russia at the time, because often when Ayn Rand describes Kira or her actions, laughing and smiling have a special place.[18]

> It seemed that the words she said were ruled by the will of her body and that her sharp movements were the unconscious reflection of a dancing, laughing soul.
>
> (44)

> Kira's mouth was thin, long. When silent, it was cold, indomitable, and men thought of a Valkyrie with lance and winged helmet in the sweep of battle. But a slight movement made a wrinkle in the corners of her lips—and men thought of an imp perched on top of a toadstool, laughing in the faces of daisies.
>
> (44)[19]

> She ran, sliding along the frozen sidewalks, laughing at strangers . . .
>
> (136)

> She smiled happily and kicked an icicle in a puddle, splashing water at the passersby, laughing.
>
> (148)

> She laughed, that strange laughter of hers which was too joyous to be gay; a laughter that held a challenge, and triumph, and ecstasy.
>
> (162)

Of course, Kira is living in Soviet Russia. To present her as utterly unaffected by her surroundings would have been unrealistic and inconsistent with the novel's theme, and would perhaps have sent the wrong message—namely, that a hero is in no way bothered or affected by his or her evil, irrational surroundings. This in part explains Kira's reaction to the operetta *Die Bajedere*:

> They [Leo and Kira] saved the money for many months and on a Sunday evening they bought two tickets to see "Bajadere," advertised as the "latest sensation of Vienna, Berlin and Paris."
>
> They sat, solemn, erect, reverent as at a church service, Kira a little paler than usual in her gray silk dress, Leo trying not to cough, and they listened to the wantonest operetta from over there, from *abroad.*
>
> It was very gay nonsense. . . . There were women in shimmering satin from a place where fashions existed, and people dancing a funny foreign dance called "Shimmy," and a woman who did not sing, but barked words out, spitting them contemptuously at the audience, in a flat, hoarse voice that trailed suddenly into a husky moan—and a music that laughed defiantly, panting, gasping, hitting one's ears and throat and breath, an impudent, drunken music, like the challenge of a triumphant gaiety, like the "Song of Broken Glass," a promise that existed somewhere, that was, that could be.
>
> The public laughed, and applauded, and laughed. When the lights went on after the final curtain, in the procession of cheerful grins down the aisles many noticed with astonishment a girl in a gray silk dress, who sat in an emptying row, bent over, her face in her hands, sobbing.
>
> (208)[20]

The music laughs, the audience laughs, but Kira cries. Why? Unlike most people in the audience, Kira had a greater capacity to see the gaiety in *Bajadere,* to see that this wasn't a pleasant momentary diversion, but that such was possible in life—life outside the USSR. She could see more clearly than others the contrast between what was possible to man in a human society, and what was the Soviet reality. That is why she cries.[21]

Aside from this scene, Kira is often presented as laughing and full of joy. Or more accurately, she is presented that way in part 1.

By my count, Kira is described as laughing or smiling (in a benevolent, joyful way) twenty times. Of these twenty, seventeen are in part 1; of the three in part 2, two are toward the beginning, the other is in the novel's last scene. What explains this distribution? During much of the novel, but especially from about the time Leo returns from the Crimea (near the beginning of part 2), Kira is fighting a losing battle. We get an indication of this battle in part 1:

> [Leo's] eyes looked at her, wide and dark, and he answered a thought they had not spoken: "Kira, think what we have against us."
>
> She bent her head a little to one shoulder, her eyes round, her lips soft, her face serene and confident as a child's; she looked at the window where, in the slanting mist of snow, men stood in line, motionless, hopeless, broken. She shook her head.
>
> "We'll fight it, Leo. Together. We'll fight all of it. The country. The century. The millions. We can stand it. We can do it."
>
> He said without hope: "We'll try."
>
> (133)

Toward the end of the novel, after Leo discovers Kira's affair with Andrei, we know her battle is lost.

> She was packing a suitcase, her back turned to him, when he asked suddenly: "Aren't you going to say anything? Have you nothing to say?"
>
> She turned and looked at him calmly, and answered: "Only this, Leo: it was I against a hundred and fifty million people. I lost."
>
> (443)

In losing the battle, did she also lose her benevolent view of the universe and life? No. She had little cause for laughter in the second part of the novel, because—and in one sense, this is the theme of ***We the Living***—the benevolent universe outlook is incompatible with statism. In a dictatorship, one can hold on to this outlook for a time (as Irina did, even as her train took her away from Sasha and to Siberia) and hope to realize such an existence elsewhere; but one cannot *live* it. Yet we discover—even as we find out (against hope) that this *is* ultimately a tragedy—that Kira's failure to achieve her goals does not destroy her sense of life.

Attempting to escape from the Soviet Union, Kira is shot by an utter mediocrity—a border guard named Ivan Ivanov.[22] ***We the Living*** ends:

> She smiled. She knew she was dying. But it did not matter any longer. She had known something which no human words could ever tell and she knew it now. She had been awaiting it and she felt it, as if it had been, as if she had lived it. Life had been, if only because she had known it could be, and she felt it now as a hymn without sound, deep under the little hole that dripped red drops into the snow, deeper than that from which the red drops came. A moment or an eternity—did it matter? Life, undefeated, existed and could exist.
>
> She smiled, her last smile, to so much that had been possible.
>
> (464)

Conclusion

A girl like Irina Dunaeva *could* end up in a prison camp in Siberia; a creature like Ivan Ivanov *could* kill a woman like Kira Argounova. But this does not mean that we are doomed, that the universe is malevolent; it means only that we are doomed—that human life is worth nothing—in the kind of existence created by Soviet Russia (or any other dictatorship).

Ayn Rand affirms the benevolent universe premise even in the face of tragedy. And given her spirit, it was inevitable that some of her heroes would not only laugh in the spirit of Kira, they would succeed in the world as well—that the "so much that had been possible" for Kira would be realized on earth. Thus ***The Fountainhead*** begins with "Howard Roark laughed," and ends with Roark triumphant, standing atop a skyscraper; and ***Atlas Shrugged*** contains Rand's fullest characterizations of the benevolent universe premise: Francisco D'Anconia, Dagny Taggart, and John Galt.

Still, why *write* a tragedy, if one maintains that the universe is benevolent? I return to the question asked at the outset, and this time provide Ayn Rand's answer:

Question:

> If the universe is benevolent, why does Kira die at the end of ***We the Living,*** just as she's about to escape?

Rand:

> I did not sit there and decide arbitrarily to let Kira die. A novel isn't written that way. If you want to know about anything in a novel, ask what its theme is. The theme of ***We the Living*** is the individual against the state. I present the evil of dictatorship, and what it does to its best individuals. If I let Kira escape, I leave the reader with the conclusion that statism is bad, but there's hope because you can always escape. But that isn't the theme of ***We the Living.*** In Russia, a citizen cannot count on leaving or escaping. Someone who does escape is an exception, because no borders can be totally closed. People do escape, but we'll never know the number of people who died trying. To let Kira escape would have been pointless. Given the theme of ***We the Living,*** she had to die.[23]

Kira's death is not a reflection of Rand's view of reality and man's life; rather, it is necessitated by Rand's desire to write a novel portraying the fate of the individual—and especially the best, most heroic sort of individual—under a dictatorship. But even in selecting and presenting such a theme—one that is as important today as it was in the 1930s—Rand wanted to affirm the benevolent universe outlook at the very moment her heroine meets a tragic end.

She gets the last word:

> The justification for presenting tragic endings in literature is to show, as in ***We the Living,*** that the human spirit can survive even the worst of circumstances—that the worst that the chance events of nature or the evil of other people can do will not defeat the proper human spirit. To quote from Galt's speech in ***Atlas Shrugged***: "Suffering as such is not a value; only man's fight against suffering, is." . . .
>
> In ***We the Living,*** all the good people are defeated. The philosophical justification of the tragedy is the fact that the story denounces the collectivist state and shows, metaphysically, that man cannot be destroyed by it; he can be killed, but not changed or negated. The heroine dies radiantly endorsing life, feeling happiness in her last moment because she has known what life properly should be.[24]

([***The Art of Fiction***])

Notes

1. On the benevolent universe premise, see Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1991), 342-43.

2. I am referring to her novels. Her short story "The Husband I Bought" and her play *Ideal* are arguably tragedies. Both were first published in Leonard Peikoff, ed., *The Early Ayn Rand* (New York: New American Library, 1984; Signet paperback edition, 1986).

3. From the question period (in which Rand took part) following lecture 8 of Leonard Peikoff's 1976 "Philosophy of Objectivism" course.

4. In a question period following lecture 11 of Leonard Peikoff's "Philosophy of Objectivism" course, Ayn Rand answers, at length, a question on humor. The description of humor quoted here comes from this source, which is referred to throughout as the Q&A on humor. Similar statements can be found in Ayn Rand, *The Art of Fiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers,* ed. Tore Boeckmann (New York: Plume, 2000), 165, and in Ayn Rand, *The Art of Nonfiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers,* ed. Robert Mayhew (New York: Plume, 2001), 126.

   For the brief presentation of Rand's conception of humor that follows, I draw on my article, "Ayn Rand Laughed: Ayn Rand on the Role of Humor in Literature and Life," *The Intellectual Activist* 16, no.1 (January 2002).

5. See Harry Binswanger, ed., *The Ayn Rand Lexicon: Objectivism from A to Z* (New York: New American Library, 1986; Meridian paperback edition, 1988), s.v. Metaphysical Value-Judgments.

6. Rand does not believe it is appropriate to laugh at *all* evil. See *Art of Nonfiction,* 126-27.

7. See the Q&A on humor. There she notes an exception: humor might be central to one's profession. Humor *can* properly be a primary value for a

comedian, just as sports can properly be a primary value for a professional tennis player, and good food for a chef.

8. See the Q&A on humor. I should mention, however, that the tone of some of her early short stories—especially "Good Copy," "Escort," and "Her Second Career"—*is* light and humorous. These were all first published in Peikoff, ed., *Early Ayn Rand.*
9. David Harriman, ed., *Journals of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1997), 59.
10. Such names were not some joke invented by Rand. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 83-84.
11. Cf. the description of a Red novel in the 1936 edition of *We the Living,* which Ayn Rand omitted from the revised edition: "She [Kira] picked up her book, but she did not want to read; the book told the story of a dam built by heroic Red workers in spite of the nefarious machinations of villainous Whites who tried to destroy it" (405).
12. Tonia, in the presence of Leo and Kira, tries to remember a line from a poem of Valentina Sirkina: "my heart is asbestos that remains cool over the blast-furnace of my emotions—or something like that" (264).
13. On humor in fiction, see Rand, *Art of Fiction,* 165-68.
14. The transcripts of Ayn Rand's 1969 nonfiction writing course was edited and published as *The Art of Nonfiction,* but there were several passages not on nonfiction—including this one on Ninotchka—excluded from the book. For more of Rand's praise of *Ninotchka,* see *Art of Fiction,* 168.
15. The Q&A on humor.
16. Harriman, *Journals,* 60.
17. Ayn Rand, "What is Romanticism?," *The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature,* revised edition (New York: Signet, 1975), 110.
18. On the dearth of smiles in Russia when Rand lived there, see her testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, in Harriman, *Journals,* 373, 380-81, and Robert Mayhew, "Russian Smiles: The Leftist Response to Ayn Rand's HUAC Testimony," *The Intellectual Activist* 16, no. 2 (February 2002).
19. Cf. Leo's smile, *We the Living,* 83.
20. On Kálmán's operetta *Die Bajadere,* see Michael S. Berliner, "The Music of *We the Living,*" in the present volume, p. 119-21.
21. In an earlier draft of the *Bajadere* passage, Ayn Rand wrote that this was the first time Kira ever cried. I am grateful to Shoshana Milgram for bringing this to my attention, and for a better understanding of this passage.
22. For Rand's account of the importance of the character Ivan Ivanov, see Michael S. Berliner, ed., *Letters of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1995), 18.
23. From the question period following lecture 8 of Leonard Peikoff's 1976 "Philosophy of Objectivism" course.
24. Rand, *Art of Fiction,* 174. I wish to thank Shoshana Milgram and Tore Boeckmann for their comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Unless otherwise indicated, quotes from Ayn Rand's *We the Living* will be followed by page number(s) in parentheses in the text and not by an endnote. Pagination refers to the sixtieth anniversary paperback edition (New York: Signet, 1996).

Tore Boeckmann (essay date 2005)

SOURCE: Boeckmann, Tore. "*Anthem* as a Psychological Novel." In *Essays on Ayn Rand's* Anthem, edited by Robert Mayhew, pp. 83-118. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005.

[*In the following essay, Boeckmann describes* Anthem *as "a psychological fantasy," as opposed to the more traditional Rand story that relies on physical action to convey its plot and central ideas, and he highlights the various narrative steps the author takes to unite its theme—"the meaning of man's ego"—and its internalized action.*]

The opening of ***Anthem*** takes the reader into strange territory.

"It is a sin to write this," writes the narrator. "It is as if we were speaking alone to no ears but our own. And we know well that there is no transgression blacker than to do or think alone" (17). This is an arresting formulation of a peculiar sentiment; but the real shock comes with the revelation of who is referred to by the plural pronoun. "We are alone here under the earth," the narrator says—"there is nothing here save our one body, and it is strange to see only two legs stretched on the ground, and on the wall before us the shadow of our one head" (17).

The reader has been introduced to a mind unlike any to be encountered in normal experience—the mind of a man who, lacking the concept "ego," or "I," refers to himself as "we."[1] ***Anthem*** is the story of how this man discovers his ego.

In addition to its lack of realism, this central story premise has one striking characteristic: its purely mental orientation. The hero of ***Anthem*** goes from ignorance to knowledge of a fact about his own consciousness.

Anthem, in Ayn Rand's own words, is a *psychological fantasy.*[2]

The genre of ***Anthem*** follows from its central premise, and these in turn determine all of the novel's other distinctive features. Take, for instance, the *setting.* To explain the hero's predicament, Ayn Rand places him in a future collectivist "utopia" where the word "I" has been eradicated and everyone refers to himself as "we" and to another individual as "they."[3] The utopia's philosophy is expressed in the words cut in marble over the portals of the Palace of the World Council:

> *We are one in all and all in one.*
> *There are no men but only the great WE,*
> *One, indivisible and forever.*
>
> (19)

The hero has been taught this philosophy since childhood. His acceptance of it is the bar to his forming a concept of the ego.

The term "ego," in Leonard Peikoff's formulation, "designates the mind (and its attributes) considered as an individual possession."[4] In this regard, observe that the word "I" can be used as a noun; one may speak of "the I," meaning the mind or self of an individual, whereas "we" is merely a pronoun. But for the collectivist utopia in ***Anthem,*** the human mind is, fundamentally, a collective possession. Thus it is "we" that gets to be a noun—"the great WE"—and "I" is not even a pronoun.

If the collective mind has metaphysical primacy, then it is logically the arbiter of truth and goodness. Thus the hero of ***Anthem*** writes that "the World Council is the body of all truth" (19), and "the Councils are the voice of all justice, for they are the voice of all men" (22). Further, as the body of truth and the voice of justice, the collective mind is entitled to *reverence.* In nightly Social Meetings, the inhabitants of the collectivist utopia sing the Hymn of the Collective Spirit (27-28).

This context explains not only why the hero of ***Anthem*** lacks the concept "ego," but also why his discovering that concept will be a prodigiously difficult task.

Note that he does have some awareness of himself as an individual. He can directly perceive his own body: "two legs stretched on the ground." He has been given the name Equality 7-2521, and although this combination of a collectivist slogan and a number is meant to eradicate his individuality, it still distinguishes him from, say, Equality 7-2522. More significantly, when he says that "there is no transgression blacker than to do or think alone," he knows that such is exactly what he is doing. "It is a sin to think words no others think and to put them down upon a paper no others are to see" (17). But this is the very sin he is committing. It is precisely for the individual exercise of the human mind that Equality condemns himself in the novel's opening.

However, he *does* condemn himself—and there lies his problem.

Whereas the collective mind is (supposedly) metaphysically normal, epistemologically potent, morally good, and worthy of reverence, Equality has been taught that any individual exercise of the mind is just the opposite: a transgression and a sin. Add to this the fact that a man experiences his mind, not as a perceptible object, but as a continuous stream of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, memories, etc. To grasp these as constituting an *ego* is difficult enough in the ordinary case.[5] But so long as Equality regards his own mental actions as aberrant, impotent, evil, and loathsome, his isolation and integration of them into the concept of an enduring, autonomous *self* is impossible to him.

To form such a concept, Equality must first learn the true nature and significance of his mind.

He must live through the story of ***Anthem***—the events of which correspond to the novel's theme: "the meaning of man's ego."[6]

The Integration of Story and Theme in *Anthem*

The Tunnel

The first chapter of ***Anthem*** is the story of a crime.

"We were born with a curse," Equality writes in his diary. "It has always driven us to thoughts which are forbidden. It has always given us wishes which men may not wish" (18). And it has "brought us step by step to our last, supreme transgression, our crime of crimes hidden here under the ground" (20). That crime is Equality's clandestine research in the old subway tunnel.

Written as Equality's own retrospective on the steps which brought him to his crime, the first chapter poses two major puzzles, to Equality himself no less than to the reader. The first concerns Equality's motive: why does he do that which he thinks is wrong? "We know that we are evil," he says, "but there is no will in us and no power to resist [our curse]. This is our wonder and our secret fear, that we know and do not resist" (18). Compare Equality to Andrei in ***We the Living,*** who says: "If it's right and you don't want to do it—you don't know what right is and you're not a man."[7] This is how one expects an Ayn Rand hero to talk. By contrast, Equality is a mystery to himself, like the tormented St. Paul, who said: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:19).

The second puzzle of the first chapter concerns the emotional effect of Equality's crime: unlike Paul, Equality is *not* tormented. The retrospective that begins with his consciousness of sin ends with his consciousness of a profound lack of guilt. "The evil of our crime is not for the human mind to probe," writes Equality.

> And yet there is no shame in us and no regret. We say to ourselves that we are a wretch and a traitor. But we feel no burden upon our spirit and no fear in our heart. And it seems to us that our spirit is clear as a lake troubled by no eyes save those of the sun. And in our heart—strange are the ways of evil!—in our heart there is the first peace we have known in twenty years. [Equality is twenty-one.]
>
> (36-37)

But the ways of "evil" are not as strange as Equality thinks. For what is his curse? It is "our cursed wish to know" (29). And what is the essence of Equality's crimes and transgressions? The exercise of his individual mind in struggling to understand the world.

In the Home of the Infants, he writes, "we fought with our brothers" (20). One can infer that this was the only way an independent but (at that age) intellectually helpless mind could resist the conformist pressure of the pack. In the Home of the Students (after the age of five), the nature of Equality's transgression changes: he is too bright. It "is a great sin, to be born with a head which is too quick" (21). Equality tries to be like Union 5-3992, "a pale boy with only half a brain" (21), but the teachers see through him and he is lashed. "We wished to know," Equality relates. "We wished to know about all the things which make the earth around us. We asked so many questions that the Teachers forbade it" (23).

It is his desire to know that leads Equality to the grave Transgression of Preference: he wishes to be sent to the Home of the Scholars. But the Council of Vocations, no doubt informed about his active mind, makes him a street sweeper instead. He resolves to accept the decision: "we would work for our brothers, gladly and willingly, and we would erase our sin against them, which they did not know, but we knew" (26). This is his "victory over ourselves" (26)—his attempt, in Paul's terms, to do "the good that I would" rather than "the evil which I would not."

Equality sustains his resolve for four years. His life in those years is described in ***Anthem***'s longest paragraph, a monotonous catalog of bleak regimentation, stuporous routine, exhausting toil, and mindless propaganda—all of which leaves not a moment's room for thought.[8] "Such would have been our life," says Equality, "had we not committed our crime which changed all things for us" (29).

Triggered by his accidental discovery of the old tunnel from the Unmentionable Times, Equality's crime consists of his claiming the tunnel for himself, as his clandestine base for scientific research. For two years, he sits in his tunnel each night, melting strange metals and mixing acids; and in those years "we have learned more than we had learned in the ten years of the Home of the

Students" (36). Although he judges his action as a sin, he is at peace with himself. "We wish nothing, save to be alone and to learn, and to feel as if with each day our sight were growing sharper than the hawk's and clearer than rock crystal" (36). Still, as we have seen, he cannot explain his deeper motive. "We ask, why must we know [the things on this earth], but [our curse] has no answer to give us. We must know that we may know" (24).

The actual answer, which Equality will eventually discover, is that he *has* a mind and that its nature is to perceive reality and guide his actions. To exercise his mind or not is his deepest choice—and *not* to exercise it is to blank himself out of existence. He is implicitly aware of this, since for four years his mind *did* lie dormant—as idle and irrelevant as the mind of Union 5-3992 (who had become his fellow street sweeper). And what he experienced in those years was not existence as a human being. This implicit knowledge is what makes him grab without a second thought at the fortuitous chance to conduct his research. Although he believes his desire and action to be evil, to act as he does is ultimately *not* a breach of integrity, since without his crime, there literally is no *him* whose convictions he could betray.

It is for the same reason that his "evil" brings him not a psychological punishment, but a psychological reward. He *has* an individual mind, and its function is to perceive, explore, and come to know reality. Each day in which his sight grows "sharper than the hawk's" is a day when his mind, and thus his *self,* is brought into its proper relationship to existence, and brought to life—which is the ultimate source of serenity and happiness. Equality is a long way from grasping all of this—because his *real* curse is not the wish to know, but his lack of a concept of the ego. However, the two puzzles he confronts in this chapter are themselves the first pieces of evidence in the chain that will eventually lead him to form such a concept, and thus to answer the puzzles.

It is clear how the events of the first chapter relate to ***Anthem***'s theme—"the meaning of man's ego"—and to the core premise of showing a man who lacks, and then discovers, the word "I." A subtler issue is how the same events fit the novel's *genre.*

Observe first that Equality's adversary, the collective, is a faceless mass who hardly notices his existence. The obstacle posed by the councils to Equality is structural rather than dynamic: they *would* stop him if they knew what he was doing, so he is forced to act in secret. But they take no active measures against him, and he has little practical trouble in eluding their grasp. "It is easy to leave the Theatre" at night and to run through the darkness to his tunnel, and later "it is easy" to fall back in line as the column of street sweepers leaves the Theatre (35). Aspiring writers of suspense thrillers have nothing to learn from Ayn Rand's literary technique here.

Next observe that the big turning point in Equality's life is triggered by an accident. Once he finds the tunnel, he uses it purposefully to conduct his research. But he does not actively seek such a hiding place; he stumbles upon it. In this, Equality is unlike the typical Ayn Rand hero, who never lets his life course be determined by happenstance.

However, suppose Equality had not chanced upon the tunnel but, say, had dug a secret hole for his research, like the escape tunnel dug by the Allied prisoners of war in *The Great Escape.* Equality would then have been responding to a central conflict—the collective versus himself—with an assertive plan of action designed to overcome practical obstacles. The result would have been logical plot connections, melodramatic suspense, a stronger existential *story*—and a fatal displacement of focus away from Equality's *mind.*

In a plot story, like Ayn Rand's other novels, the link between the theme and the events is the element which Ayn Rand called the plot-theme. She described this as "the central conflict or 'situation' of a story—a conflict in terms of action, corresponding to the theme and complex enough to create a purposeful progression of events [i.e., a plot]."[9] By contrast, ***Anthem***'s equivalent of a plot-theme is not an action conflict, but the premise of a man who lacks, and then discovers, the concept "ego." What facilitates the novel's integration of story and theme is a psychological gimmick. This precludes the introduction of a central action conflict and a plot.[10] *Two* integrating premises is a contradiction—it is *dis*integration.

Ayn Rand has to maintain a careful balance in ***Anthem.*** She needs a coherent story, but she cannot let the elements of existential storytelling start to cohere on their own terms. In literature, physical action exerts a stronger claim on the reader's attention than introspective revelation, and any emergent *existential* basis of integration will wipe out a mental one. Therefore, to keep the focus on Equality's mental progression—to keep the "we" in his mind, and the eventual "I," from becoming mere stylistic garnish to an action drama—Ayn Rand downplays the existential conflict and makes a key turning point accidental.

Her stylistic treatment of the events serves the same purpose. It is Equality's *accidental* discovery of the tunnel that is dramatized across several pages, while his purposeful utilization of the tunnel to circumvent the collective—an action that follows logically from the preceding events—is merely synopsized in a few paragraphs.

Here, too, Ayn Rand demonstrates her grasp of what she is writing: a psychological fantasy.

Liberty 5-3000

"We do not know why we think of them," writes Equality of Liberty 5-3000.

"We do not know why, when we think of them, we feel of a sudden that the earth is good and that it is not a burden to live" (41).

Equality's love for Liberty 5-3000 confronts him with new puzzles. For one thing, he has been taught that "all men must be alike" (19), but Liberty, and her response to him, prove that they are not. She tells him:

> "You are not one of our brothers, Equality 7-2521, for we do not wish you to be."
>
> We cannot say what they meant, for there are no words for their meaning, but we know it without words and we knew it then.
>
> "No," we answered, "nor are you one of our sisters."
>
> (43)

What makes Liberty differ from her sisters? "Their eyes were dark and hard and glowing, with no fear in them, no kindness and no guilt," Equality writes of his first sight of her. "They threw seeds from their hand as if they deigned to fling a scornful gift, and the earth was as a beggar under their feet" (39).

And what makes Equality differ from his brothers? "Your eyes are not like the eyes of any among men" (44), Liberty tells him in their first conversation. Later in the novel, she specifies:

> Your eyes are as a flame, but our brothers have neither hope nor fire. Your mouth is cut of granite, but our brothers are soft and humble. Your head is high, but our brothers cringe. You walk, but our brothers crawl.
>
> (82-83)

Equality and Liberty see in each other the exact same characteristic: an indomitable *pride*. It is a trait Equality has not yet consciously identified in himself. Yet his response to seeing such pride in Liberty is instantaneous: love at first sight. "And we stood still that we might not spill this pain more precious than pleasure" (39).

As Aristotle put it, in a passage that could have been written specifically about Equality,

> it is both a most difficult thing, as some of the sages have said, to attain a knowledge of oneself, and also a most pleasant thing. . . . And so, as when we wish to see our own face, we do so by looking into the mirror, in the same way when we wish to know ourselves we can obtain that knowledge by looking at the one we love. For the one we love is, as we say, another self. If, then, it is pleasant to contemplate oneself, and it is not possible to do this without having someone else whom one loves, the self-sufficient man *will* need someone to love.[11]

Equality is introspectively groping to conceptualize his self, but he is merely at the beginning of a long and torturous process. However, in Liberty he can perceive his self simply, directly, without groping, in an object of the external world.

His emotional response to this perception is no less intense for being, to him, mysterious. On the day when he first speaks to Liberty, he starts to sing without reason. "We are singing because we are happy," he tells the member of the Home Council who reprimands him. He is answered: "How else can men be when they live for their brothers?" (45).

Yet Equality can see that his brothers are not happy. "The heads of our brothers are bowed," he writes that night in his tunnel.

> The eyes of our brothers are dull, and never do they look one another in the eyes. The shoulders of our brothers are hunched, and their muscles are drawn, as if their bodies were shrinking and wished to shrink out of sight. And a word steals into our mind, as we look upon our brothers, and that word is fear.
>
> (46)

Clearly, his brothers are neither happy nor proud.

It is no literary coincidence that Equality meets Liberty after he has spent two years conducting research in his tunnel, i.e., after he has objectively earned the pride that is the bond between them. And it is probably no coincidence that his reflection on the state of his brothers occurs on the night after he has first spoken to Liberty. Through his relationship to her, he has gained a clearer sense of what he is, which has drawn his attention to the fact that "our brothers are not like us" (47).

For Equality, the evidence is accumulating. And it is precisely *as* evidence of Equality's ego that his and Liberty's love relate to the totality of the story. Observe that Ayn Rand abstains from turning the forbidden love into a melodramatic aspect of the conflict between Equality and the collective. To avoid detection, he and Liberty are forced to communicate partly by glances and gestures—but the subterfuge is elementary. By contrast, if Equality had stolen away in disguise at night for secret assignations with Liberty, the focus would have been displaced from his mental progression to the existential story. So Ayn Rand instead has him simply waiting for a fortuitous opportunity to speak to Liberty again.

When that opportunity comes, he gains another clue.

Equality and Liberty's love constitutes a celebration of their egos. This they do not explicitly understand, but at least Equality can name the emotional quality of what

he experiences: it is a "pain more precious than pleasure" when he first sees Liberty, and "happiness" when he has first spoken with her. But in their next encounter, they both experience something he is unable to express directly in words.

The encounter takes place after Equality has discovered electricity, and thus has gained an even greater appreciation of his mental efficacy. He and Liberty exchange the names they have given each other in their thoughts: the Golden One and the Unconquered. At the end of their encounter, the Golden One stands before Equality "as if their body were delivered in submission to our eyes" (56-57).

> Then they knelt by the moat, they gathered water in their two hands, they rose and they held the water out to our lips.
>
> We do not know if we drank that water. We only knew suddenly that their hands were empty, but we were still holding our lips to their hands, and that they knew it, but did not move.
>
> We raised our head and stepped back. For we did not understand what had made us do this, and we were afraid to understand it.
>
> And the Golden One stepped back, and stood looking upon their hands in wonder. Then the Golden One moved away, even though no others were coming, and they moved stepping back, as if they could not turn from us, their arms bent before them, as if they could not lower their hands.
>
> (57-58)

With its motif of submissive offering and exalted acceptance, this physical seal on Equality and the Golden One's love has the form of a religious rite, performed in reverence for the highest and most uplifted—but by worshipers who act like sleepwalkers, evoking the drugged trance of an Oriental ceremony. The scene is written as if Equality and the Golden One are the sacred vessels of something far beyond their conscious understanding.

And at this point, that is what they are.

The Power and the Light

"We, Equality 7-2521, have discovered a new power of nature. And we have discovered it alone, and we are alone to know it" (52).

Equality has rediscovered electricity—and it was not a lucky chance. Unknown to himself, he has duplicated the experiments of Galvani, Volta and Franklin. The nature of this research is related in a highly essentialized way, which keeps the focus on the meaning of his discovery for Equality's mental progression.

Equality is now able to draw two conscious conclusions. The first is that "the Council of Scholars is blind" and that the "secrets of this earth are not for all men to see, but only for those who will seek them" (52). The second conclusion is an even more profound overturn of everything Equality has been taught. "No single one can possess greater wisdom than the many Scholars who are elected by all men for their wisdom. Yet we can. We do" (54).

If this constitutes a puzzle for Equality, he does not dwell on it. Although "it frightens us that we are alone in our knowledge" (54), his main emotional reaction is one of assured confidence in his individual mental powers and of dismissive contempt for the Scholars. "So much is still to be learned! So long a road lies before us, and what care we if we must travel it alone!" (54).

When Equality reinvents the electric light, his attitude changes.

For one thing, he reacts to his own invention with a delirious excitement not in evidence when he discovered electricity. "We made it. We created it. We brought it forth from the night of the ages. We alone. Our hands. Our mind. Ours alone and only" (59). This change of tone reflects the difference between a scientific and a technological achievement. The discovery of electricity is a simple recognition of reality, and a testament to the *cognitive* efficacy of Equality's mind; the invention of the electric light is an extension of himself into physical reality and a testament to his *creative* efficacy.

> We stretched our hands to the wire, and we saw our fingers in the red glow. We could not see our body nor feel it, and in that moment nothing existed save our two hands over a wire glowing in a black abyss.
>
> (60)

In the darkness of the tunnel, it is his own ego that Equality sees glowing.

The implications of his invention are immediately clear to Equality. The new power "can be made to do men's bidding" (60), he writes. "We can light our tunnel, and the City, and all the Cities of the world with nothing save metal and wires" (60). He realizes that his discoveries cannot be extended or applied on the scale they deserve—in a secret hole in the ground. While earlier he was content to travel the road of learning alone, he now decides to bring his secret "into the sight of men" (60). He will resolve the main conflict of the novel,[12] the conflict that has forced him into the role of an outcast. He will present his light to the World Council of Scholars. "They will see, understand and forgive," he thinks. "For our gift is greater than our transgression" (61).

Equality's decision to abandon the secrecy follows from his revolutionary *technological* invention. But since Ayn Rand is writing a psychological fantasy, not a plot

story, Equality's diary entry on his invention does not end with a plan of action logically connected to the preceding events. Instead, the focus is brought back to Equality's mind.

> Men never see their own faces and never ask their brothers about it, for it is evil to have concern for their own faces or bodies. But tonight, for a reason we cannot fathom, we wish it were possible to us to know the likeness of our own person.
>
> (61-62)

After reinventing the electric light, and deciding to resolve the conflict that has shaped his entire life, Equality's concluding thought for the night is—the wish for a mirror. That this does not come across as vain or ludicrous, but as appropriate, inevitable, and moving, is a tribute to Ayn Rand's sustained focus on her novel's primary concern: Equality's mental struggle to grasp his ego.

The Whipping

"The first blow of the lash felt as if our spine had been cut in two," Equality remembers. "The second blow stopped the first, and for a second we felt nothing, then the pain struck us in our throat and fire ran in our lungs without air. But we did not cry out" (64).

Equality finds himself in the torture room of the Palace of Corrective Detention partly by accident. On the night when he invents the electric light, he forgets to watch the time and returns to the City Theatre too late to join the departing street sweepers. The World Council of Scholars will not meet for another month. If Equality hides in his tunnel, he and his light will be discovered by lesser representatives of the collective. So to protect his light from destruction, he turns himself in. He is lashed until he blacks out, but refuses to reveal where he has been. Then, on the night before the Council meets, he escapes from the Palace, runs back to his tunnel, and awaits the morning.

This whole sequence plays no role in the progression of the existential story of ***Anthem.*** At the end of chapter six (his diary entry on his torture), Equality is precisely where he was at the end of chapter five: sitting in his tunnel with the resolution to show the scholars his light. In terms of his existential position, the only thing that has changed is the passage of time. Moreover, as noted, the whipping episode is set off from the rest of the story by arising from an accident. While it is logical that Equality would turn himself in *given* that he has forgotten the time, the forgetfulness itself is not determined by the previous events (although it is plausibly explained by Equality's emotional state at the time).

Also, while Equality's *escape* from the Palace does follow logically from his previous resolution to go to the scholars, the escape involves no melodrama. Just as it has been "easy to leave the Theatre" and run to the tunnel, so it is now

> easy to escape from the Palace of Corrective Detention. The locks are old on the doors and there are no guards about. There is no reason to have guards, for men have never defied the Councils so far as to escape from whatever place they were ordered to be.
>
> (66-67)

Equality's obstacle is not the collectivist state as such, but his lack of a concept of the ego. And the self-contained nature of the whipping episode stresses its real purpose: not to form a link in a melodramatic chain of events, but to demonstrate something about Equality's *mind.* That he gives himself up, presumably knowing that he may be lashed, and then resists the torture, proves to himself and to the reader the *intensity* with which Equality values his invention of electric light—the foremost product of his ego.

Ayn Rand once stated that her literary "concern with torture" came from the adventure story *The Mysterious Valley,* which profoundly influenced her as a child.[13] The hero of that novel, Cyrus Paltons, remains defiant when threatened with a whipping by an evil Hindu. Ayn Rand would include a torture scene not only in ***Anthem,*** but also in her greatest novel, ***Atlas Shrugged.*** And both of these scenes add an element of characterization that only the depiction of physical torture can accomplish.

As an aspect of consciousness, intensity of valuing cannot be measured by a general standard like inches or pounds. A story may show a character giving up one value for another and thus indicate their relative importance *to him,* as when Howard Roark in ***The Fountainhead*** turns down the Manhattan Bank Company commission to preserve his artistic integrity. He values his integrity more than the commission. But the intensity with which Roark values the commission is something the reader can estimate only approximately from the general context of the story.

Pain provides a more direct standard. As a *sensation,* it has the same quality and meaning for all men: it is self-evidently bad, and it can itself be measured in terms of intensity and duration. The reader can empathize directly with each racking blow that lands on Equality's back. Even if the reader himself has never been lashed, he can know by projection from his own experience of pain the strength of resolve that makes Equality refuse to speak. And he can know exactly what Equality feels when he regains consciousness in his cell, and smiles—"for we thought of the light and that we had not betrayed it" (66).

The literary use of torture to measure intensity of valuing can be appropriate in any kind of story, but it is particularly suited to a psychological fantasy like ***Anthem.*** Had Ayn Rand instead confronted Equality with a

dramatic choice between two *existential* values—say, his light and the life of the Golden One—this would have displaced the story's focus from Equality's mind. In ***Anthem,*** the hero's commitment to his highest value is best measured against another phenomenon of his *consciousness*—the pain Equality triumphs over in the torture scene.

This does not mean that Equality's whipping is irrelevant to his later actions. On the contrary, after resisting physical torture, Equality will not abandon his light because of a prison door with an old lock, or any equivalent.

And he will soon have another opportunity to prove it.

The Scholars

"We saw a great painting on the wall over their heads, of the twenty illustrious men who had invented the candle" (68).

As Equality walks into the meeting of the World Council of Scholars, this painting symbolizes to him the reason why he is there. Earlier, he has condemned the scholars as "blind" and has concluded that he himself has "greater wisdom" than they do. But he still retains some respect for their powers of thought. After all, "the great modern inventions come from the Home of the Scholars, such as the newest one, which we found only a hundred years ago, of how to make candles from wax and string" (23-24). This is the technological precursor of Equality's own electric light, which may be why he thinks of "our brother Scholars" and wants "their wisdom joined to ours" (60). But when he demonstrates his new invention to them—when he closes the circuit and the wire glows—terror strikes the scholars. "They leapt to their feet, they ran from the table, and they stood pressed against the wall, huddled together, seeking the warmth of one another's bodies to give them courage" (70).[14]

Of the scholars, the first to move forward from the wall is Collective 0-0009. He asks Equality, "How dared you think that your mind held greater wisdom than the minds of your brothers?" (71). The "oldest and wisest of the Council" (69), and the closest Equality ever has to a personal antagonist, Collective is a complete cipher. His name may be Ayn Rand's private joke. In ***We the Living,*** the heroine responds to the idea that society is a "stupendous whole" by saying, "If you write a whole line of zeroes, it's still—nothing."[15] Ayn Rand could well have had this remark in mind when, in writing ***Anthem,*** she combined "Collective" with a string of zeroes (concluded by a "9," a digit visually close to a zero).

The other scholars follow Collective in moving from the wall—and in condemning Equality. He shall be burned at the stake, they say, or lashed. But Collective, appropriately, has the best grasp of proper collective decision making. "No such crime has ever been committed," he says, "and it is not for us to judge" (72). He passes the buck to a higher council.

Equality asks what will happen to his light.

"What is not thought by all men cannot be true" (73), says Collective—after he has *seen* the wire glow. "What is not done collectively cannot be good" (73), says another scholar. Many scholars "have had strange new ideas in the past," says yet another, "but when the majority of their brother Scholars voted against them, they abandoned their ideas, as all men must" (73).

In this scene, Equality can see first-hand the nature of the collective mind at its highest development. He can see what is *really* symbolized by the painting of the twenty men who invented the candle. And, probably, he can see the motive that makes Collective point to the box containing his invention and say, "This thing must be destroyed" (74).

But Equality does not yet have all the evidence required to understand fully what he has seen, nor the time to think about it. In this respect, compare him to John Galt in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** who is present at the *formation* of a collectivist society which claims him—and, by implication, his revolutionary new invention—as its property. When Galt stands up and says, "I will put an end to this, once and for all," his voice is "clear and without any feeling."[16] Galt knows exactly what is wrong with collectivism; he has the intellectual basis for calm determination. Equality does not. He has only his rage. When the other scholars follow Collective's lead and cry, "It must be destroyed!" Equality, rage choking his voice, cries, "You fools! You fools! You thrice-damned fools!" (75). Then he swings his fist through the windowpane and escapes with his invention.

He runs to the Unchartered Forest, which "men never enter" (48). In doing so, Equality resolves the main conflict of the novel, although not in the way he had expected. He breaks unequivocally with the collective.

This is not a conscious decision, which would presuppose conclusions Equality has not yet drawn (and would make his escape too much of a plot event). Rather, Equality's escape is a *subconsciously* driven action. "We had not thought of coming here, but our legs had carried our wisdom, and our legs had brought us to the Unchartered Forest against our will" (75). However, after the fact Equality's action does give him conscious knowledge of something he had not been clear about previously. "We have not built [our] box for the good of our brothers. We built it for its own sake. It is above all our brothers to us, and its truth above their truth" (76).

Equality's confrontation with the scholars has not merely shown him the nature of the collective mind, but also taught him something crucial about his own.

The Forest

"The moss is soft and warm," writes Equality. "We shall sleep on this moss for many nights, till the beasts of the forest come to tear our body. We have no bed now, save the moss, and no future, save the beasts" (68).

Equality's first night in the forest is marked by tired resignation. Although glad to be away from his fellow men, he thinks he is doomed. And the reason for his resignation is not a fear of wild beasts.

At this point, Equality knows that he can *think* alone. He knows that he can *create* alone. What he does not yet know is that he can *be,* alone. He has learned the efficacy of his individual mental actions, but not the fact that he, as an individual, has metaphysical primacy over the collective. Consequently, Equality expects "the corruption to be found in solitude. We have torn ourselves from the truth which is our brother men, and there is no road back for us, and no redemption" (76).

Equality's sense of doom vanishes in the morning.

His first impulse on waking is "to leap to our feet, as we have had to leap every morning of our life" (78). But then he remembers that he is now free from the collective's regimentation. "We thought suddenly that we could lie thus as long as we wished, and we laughed aloud at the thought" (78). Then he leaps up and throws himself into an ecstatic frenzy of joyous motion—and "we heard suddenly that we were laughing, laughing aloud, laughing as if there were no power left in us save laughter" (79).

Humor, in Ayn Rand's words, "is the denial of metaphysical importance to that which you laugh at."[17] But Equality's laughter in this scene, while metaphysical, is not humor. It is what Robert Mayhew has called "a special kind of laughter which transcends humor: laughter in response to a benevolent universe."[18] Such laughter may imply a relief that one does not have to take the negative seriously—but the laugher's focus of attention is the positive.

Equality's sense of a benevolent universe—one auspicious to a being of his nature—is confirmed as he walks further into the forest that he had so recently thought menacing. "The trees parted before us, calling us forward. The forest seemed to welcome us" (79). When Equality feels hungry, he proves his efficacy by killing and cooking a bird. He feels a "strange new pride in eating" (79). And later, it is precisely an impression of practical efficacy that strikes him when, on the surface of a stream, he sees his own likeness for the first time. His limbs are "straight and thin and hard and strong. And we thought that we could trust this being who looked upon us from the stream, and that we had nothing to fear with this being" (80).

Equality now has the evidence to conclude that he can survive on his own in the forest, and wider, that he is the kind of *being* that is fit for existence. He has the evidence—but not the concept that would facilitate the full, conscious conclusion. So he says that he cannot yet speak, "for we cannot understand" (80). But in his joyous laughter, his emotions speak for his implicit knowledge. And they speak as well when, at nightfall, "we remembered that we are the Damned. We remembered it, and we laughed" (80).

This time Equality's laughter *is* humorous. He is denying the metaphysical importance of an erroneous metaphysical viewpoint: that the individual cannot exist apart from the collective.

The Golden One

"We stood together for a long time. And we were frightened that we had lived for twenty-one years and had never known what joy is possible to men" (83).

Equality already knows that he can *survive* apart from the collective. When the Golden One joins him in the forest, he learns that he can be *happy* apart from it.

Early in ***Anthem,*** at the end of his first conversation with her, Equality had decided that he would never let the Golden One be sent to the Palace of Mating, the collective's breeding institution. But on the night of his escape from the city, he had put any thought of her aside, believing he was "one of the Damned" (77). So when the Golden One joins him, having heard of his escape, it is on her own initiative.

This is important for reasons of both genre and theme. First, for Equality to steal back into the city to "rescue" the Golden One would, qua melodrama, derail the psychological fantasy. Second, if the Golden One's escape is to be thematically congruent, she must make as independent a break with the collective as Equality has done. After all, what keeps her in the city is not guards or barbed wire, which Equality could help her defeat. The collective's hold on her is *mental.* To break it, she must assert her own ego by means of loyalty in action to a strong personal value. And she does. Just as Equality has his light, the Golden One has Equality. He escapes to protect his light, she to join the man she loves.

The Golden One's acting from love does not make her a dependent character. Like Equality, she lacks a concept of the ego. Given what she has (and has not) been

taught, for her to break with the collective in the name of a personal value like love requires heroic independence. And in one sense, the Golden One's break is even more heroic than Equality's: it is a fully conscious action. Equality's legs "brought us to the Unchartered Forest against our will." The Golden One knows where she is going.

If Equality keeps his resolution to save the Golden One from the Palace of Mating, it is by the example he sets in escaping from the city. But she follows that example only because she is worthy of him.

It is no coincidence that Equality is reunited with the Golden One on his *second* day in the forest, not the first. Sex, in Ayn Rand's words, is "a celebration of [one]self and of existence."[19] In order to celebrate his self's efficacy in the universe, Equality must first possess ample evidence of it, as he does after a day alone in the forest. "There is no danger in solitude," he tells the Golden One. "It is our own world, Golden One, a strange, unknown world but our own" (83-84).

On the basis of this knowledge does Equality go on to learn that "to hold the body of women in our arms is neither ugly nor shameful"—as it was in the collective's breeding rooms—"but the one ecstasy granted to the race of men" (84).

In the following days, Equality thinks about the evidence he has gathered.

> There is no joy for men, save the joy shared with all their brothers. But the only things which taught us joy were the power we created in our wires, and the Golden One. And both these joys belong to us alone, they come from us alone, they bear no relation to our brothers, and they do not concern our brothers in any way.
>
> (86)

He concludes that there is some "frightful error in the thinking of men" (86).

He gets his next clue from the Golden One, who is struggling with the same issues from her own distinct perspective.

> Today, the Golden One stopped suddenly and said:
>
> "We love you."
>
> But then they frowned and shook their head and looked at us helplessly.
>
> "No," they whispered, "that is not what we wished to say."
>
> They were silent, then they spoke slowly, and their words were halting, like the words of a child learning to speak for the first time:
>
> "We are one . . . alone . . . and only . . . and we love you who are one . . . alone . . . and only."
>
> We looked into each other's eyes and we knew that the breath of a miracle had touched us, and fled, and left us groping vainly.
>
> And we felt torn, torn for some word we could not find.
>
> (86-87)

In ***The Fountainhead,*** Howard Roark says, "To say 'I love you' one must know first how to say the 'I.'"[20] The Golden One could not come closer without having the word.

In fact, she and Equality *do* here grasp everything essential to the concept "ego"—ephemerally. All they lack for a full conscious grasp is the material sound of a word to anchor this mental content and make it a constant in their minds.

Equality is clearly on the verge of forming the concept "ego." He has the evidence he needs.

Yet there is one more event to come before he does form the concept—an event which provides evidence not primarily of the ego's existence, but of its full meaning.

The House

"Never had we seen rooms so full of light," writes Equality of the house he has found. "The sunrays danced upon colors, colors, more colors than we thought possible, we who had seen no houses save the white ones, the brown ones and the grey" (90).

Why does Equality find the old house from the Unmentionable Times? Earlier, he had planned to some day "stop and build a house, when we shall have gone far enough" (84-85). But this proves unnecessary when he finds one ready-made. And as with the tunnel, he finds the house by accident. Would it not be a more individualistic action if he built a house himself?

There are several reasons, relating to style, theme, and genre, why Equality finds a house rather than builds one. The reason of style is the simplest: the books in the library of the old house will enable Equality to learn the word "I" in the language in which ***Anthem*** is written—as opposed to his coining a new word of his own, which would be stylistically awkward. The books also give Equality knowledge of history and mythology, which he refers to in the last chapter. But these matters could have been handled differently.

The thematic reason is a more profound one. A house that Equality built for himself could be only a frontiersman's cabin, which would not provide a good contrast to the primitive life in the collectivist city. Such a contrast has been hinted at in the old legend of "the towers

which rose to the sky in those Unmentionable Times" (19), as against "the Home of the Leaders, which is the greatest house in the City, for it has three stories" (25). But to grasp the full meaning of man's ego, Equality must experience first-hand the difference between an individualist and a collectivist way of life.

Ayn Rand held that she could not have identified reason as man's means of survival without the evidence of the Industrial Revolution. Similarly, Equality has not yet had full proof that his box with glowing wires is more than just an interesting gadget, like the toy steam engines of Ancient Rome. The house from the Unmentionable Times gives him the proof. It is a concrete structure with Frank Lloyd Wright—like windows that continue straight around the corners, and with mirrors, printed books, crystal bottles, silk flowers, colors—and electric lighting. Such a house, Equality learns from the sleeping arrangements, was built for only two people.

Nothing could better concretize for him the scope of achievement and luxury made possible by man's ego.

At the age of twenty-one, Equality has rediscovered electricity and reinvented the electric light. He need not prove his self-reliance by building a log cabin. What he does need is what the house gives him: evidence that man's ego is not only his means of thought, creation, survival, and happiness—it is a cause of *splendor.*

The third reason why Equality finds a house, rather than builds one, follows from ***Anthem***'s nature as a psychological fantasy. As we have seen, the core premise of ***Anthem*** is the device of showing a man who lacks the concept "ego"—and his mental journey toward its discovery. Throughout, Ayn Rand takes great care not to let the existential events dominate over Equality's mental progress as the locus of primary interest. Thus, in the novel's first two-thirds, she never lets the conflict between Equality and the collective develop into a plot structure of logically connected events.

After the resolution of this conflict and his escape from the city, Equality faces no existential obstacles whatever. There is no "rise to the climax" in ***Anthem,*** in the sense of a progressive intensification of existential conflict leading to a climactic resolution. Instead there is a complete cessation of conflict long before the novel's end. (One could say that Equality's traveling is motivated by the desire to avoid pursuit. But his primary motive is probably psychological rather than practical: "each day added to the chain of days between us and the City is like an added blessing" [84]. And even considered as a faint aftereffect of the main conflict, Equality's traveling has achieved its purpose by the time he discovers the house: "we knew that no men would ever follow our track nor reach us here" [88].)

Not only does Equality face no conflict after his escape from the city, his escape is followed by the systematic removal of any urgent existential need on his part. He easily learns how to survive on his own in the forest. He is reunited with his beloved. And he finds a large, well-equipped house, providing him with material comfort and relieving him from any immediate practical effort.

For Equality to stop and *build* a house would be a fatal break with this pattern. Unlike the merely transitional act of traveling, building a house would constitute the existential inauguration of Equality's new life as an individualist. And by the nature of ***Anthem,*** Equality's new life—with all its attendant struggles and efforts—cannot start before its full *intellectual* inauguration: his discovery of the concept "ego."

That discovery is the essence of ***Anthem***'s climax—of the final resolution of the hero's struggles.

Throughout the novel, Equality has been struggling to understand—to understand why he pursues a course he thinks is evil, why he feels no guilt, why he is successful and happy while his brothers are not. Implicitly, he has been struggling to know the existence and meaning of the ego. But so long as this mental struggle occurred in the context of conflict and existential effort, its resolution would have been diluted and anticlimactic. As a *mental* breakthrough, the climax of ***Anthem*** must be prepared for by the removal of all practical concerns and a concomitant intensification of focus on the hero's psychological need. Only then will the climax have its maximum effect.

As we get our last view of him before the climax, Equality—in an existential context of harmony, rest, and fulfillment—exclaims in his diary: "May knowledge come to us! What is the secret our heart has understood and yet will not reveal to us, although it seems to beat as if it were endeavoring to tell it?" (93).

His only longing now is mental.

Anthem and *Peer Gynt*

The closest literary counterpart to ***Anthem*** is *Peer Gynt.*[21] Yet the mental road traveled by the protagonist of Ibsen's play leads in the opposite direction of Equality's: Peer Gynt starts by professing pride in his ego, but in the end discovers that an ego is precisely what he lacks.

Set in early nineteenth-century Norway, the play's first half presents Peer as a penniless country boy—with enormous aspirations. He has what people colloquially describe as "a big ego."

> Just you wait, I'll take in hand
> Something—something really grand! . . .
> I'll become a king, an emperor.[22]

Yet Peer pursues no goals beyond dreaming elaborate daydreams and spinning fantastic tales about invented exploits. He is a complete whim-worshiper. At a wedding party, he falls in love with Solveig, an innocent young girl; but moments later, on a whim, he runs off to the mountains with the bride—whom he discards the next morning, remembering Solveig. He is declared an outlaw, and Solveig, breaking with her Pietist family, joins him at his cabin in the woods (much as the Golden One joins Equality). But Peer tells Solveig he is going out on an errand—and instead of coming back, he leaves the country.

This is the realistic business of the first three acts—but the telling is far from realistic. Not only do Peer's reveries and tall tales have scant basis in fact; the dramatic action itself consists partly of fantastic scenes of introspective symbolism, conveyed by figures of Norwegian folklore. One such scene—a feverish dream of Peer's—takes place in the hall of the Mountain King. Peer is bargaining about terms for marrying the troll king's daughter, who has aroused his lust. He agrees to everything, including the demand that he let himself be turned into a troll—but he balks when told that he can never go back to being human. He says to the Mountain King:

> To be like a mountain troll all of one's days,
> Forever cut off from retreat to old ways—
> *This* is a point which is close to your heart,
> Whereas for me it's the cue to depart.

By contrast, when Solveig joins Peer in the woods, she tells him, "That road I have stepped on never turns back."

Solveig's line is realistic (though metaphorical); Peer's encounter with the Mountain King is decidedly not. This indicates the pattern of the first half of *Peer Gynt*: a fairly coherent, realistic progression of events—broken up by fantasy sequences exploring Peer's psychology. Why does Ibsen shatter the realism? Because he is writing a psychological fantasy.

This becomes fully apparent in act four, where any semblance of logical story progression is abandoned. Peer is now introduced as a middle-aged bon vivant and former slave trader—on his way to assist, for profit, the Turks in their war against Greek independence. His goal, he tells some acquaintances on the coast of Morocco, is to become emperor of the world by means of his riches. In pursuing his old ambition, he is, as he sees it, being true to himself. And when asked, What *is* the Gyntian self? he answers:

> The Gyntian *self,* it's that entire
> Array of whims and feelings of desire—
> The Gyntian self, it is that land
> Of impulse, appetite, demand—
> To cut it short, it's all the things which give
> *My* lungs their breath, so I, qua me, can live.

The Turkish affair falls apart. For a while, Peer dreams of founding a colony in Morocco—"Gyntiana," with the capital "Peeropolis." He forgets about this when he is embraced as a prophet by a tribe of Arabs. The role of prophet soon bores him, and, attracted to a Bedouin chief's daughter, he fancies himself a great lover. But when the girl flees with all of his valuables, he decides to become a great historian. At the end of the fourth act, Peer is crowned "emperor of the self" in a madhouse in Cairo.

In act five, he returns to Norway an old man. Looking back on his life, he starts peeling a wild onion, each layer representing one of his "selfs": historian, prophet, bon vivant, slave-trader, etc.

> What a lot of layers!
> Won't the core soon come to light?
> No, damn, all the way it's
> Only layers, growing slight.

With the remark "Nature is witty!" Peer throws away the onion. But soon he is staggering through the wilderness, confronting his lack of a firm self through symbolic conversations with an array of fantasy figures from national and religious folklore, or purely of Ibsen's making. Foremost among these is the Button-Molder, who has come from "the Master" to collect Peer's crippled soul for the "metal value." Peer's spirit is to be melted into the mass from which new souls are molded like buttons. He reacts with horror.

> This molding transaction, this Gyntish cessation,
> Fills my innermost soul with acute perturbation.

Peer does not want to give up his self. The Button-Molder answers that Peer has never had one. He has a spirit; but by never remaining loyal to any personal value, he has failed to give his spirit a definite, lasting *identity.*

The basic *message* of *Peer Gynt*—that loyalty to external values is the key to personal identity—is obviously consonant with ***Anthem***'s. In ***Anthem,*** Equality's journey toward a concept of the ego depends on an intransigent loyalty to his values (his research and his light). Equality's constancy is what gives his ego the firm identity which in turn allows him to grasp that ego conceptually—and such constancy is precisely what Peer defaults on, leaving him with no sense of a distinct self.

When Peer visits the madhouse in Cairo, he states that he is "myself in everything," whereas, he presumes, the inmates have lost their selves. The madhouse director replies that Peer is wrong; in the madhouse, everyone is "himself and nothing else."

> All lock themselves up in the casks of self
> And stop the bungholes with the bungs of self;
> They swell the wooden lining of the wells
> Of self, then climb down all the rungs of self.

The inmates live completely within their own minds; their thoughts, desires, and actions have no basis in the external world. This is what makes them insane. And it is what makes them similar to Peer, whose tall tales and daydreams have no foundation in reality, whose extravagant ambitions are not pursued in reality, and who acts on the random whims of his consciousness. Peer is not mad; but he is, like madmen, an implicit exponent of what Ayn Rand called the "primacy of consciousness"—the idea that consciousness has metaphysical primacy over existence and that existence is a derivative phenomenon.[23] To Peer, if he *thinks* he will do great things, then he will; he need not actually *do* anything. If he *thinks* he is a prophet, a lover, a historian, then he is; he need not pursue these vocations in action across time. If he *thinks* he has an ego, then he does.

But in fact he doesn't, as Ibsen shows.

Leaving Ibsen's own view aside for a moment, what Peer's fate demonstrates is the mistakenness of the primacy of consciousness. The true principle is the "primacy of existence": existence exists, and consciousness is simply the faculty of perceiving it. Apart from its awareness of reality, consciousness is nothing—and thus it is no wonder that a mind like Peer's, which divorces itself from reality, fails to develop a distinct ego.

Nor is it any wonder that, in ***Anthem,*** Equality *does* develop an ego—by consistently perceiving reality, forming reality-based values, and pursuing these *in* reality. Ironically, Equality gains his firm sense of self from his implicit refusal ever to regard his own mind—or any mind—as the metaphysical primary.[24] Observe that the councils in ***Anthem*** uphold the primacy of consciousness—"What is not thought by all men cannot be true"—but they think that the *collective* mind has primacy over both reality and the individual mind. Unable even to conceive of the primacy of existence, the councils in effect regard Equality as a kind of Peer Gynt. But in fact Equality's opposition to the collective is never a subjective rebellion; he is always guided by reality. And his vocation—science—is especially suited to demonstrating his reality-orientation. (The point would have required more elaboration if Equality had been, say, an artist like Howard Roark in ***The Fountainhead.***)

While *Peer Gynt* demonstrates the corruption of upholding one's own mind's metaphysical primacy, Ibsen does not ultimately share Ayn Rand's primacy-of-existence premise. The scenes with the Button-Molder imply that Peer's ultimate default is a failure to have intuited, and then acted on, the purpose that "the Master" had in mind for him. In other words (and whether the Master represents God or Hegel's *Geist*), Peer's real treason is not to existence, but to the one supreme consciousness that *really* has primacy. However, this philosophical difference with ***Anthem*** is not stressed in *Peer Gynt* to the point of negating the overall thematic consonance of the two works.

In terms of *genre, Peer Gynt* and ***Anthem*** are not merely consonant, but identical. The link between the theme and the events of *Peer Gynt* is a mental premise: a man who believes he has an ego discovers that he does not. As in ***Anthem,*** this kind of central premise leads to a psychological fantasy, in which the focus is kept on the mental progression through the lack of a strongly coherent existential story—and, in *Peer Gynt,* through introspective fantasy segments. Moreover, the elements of conventional story progression in *Peer Gynt* diminish in the build-up to the climax—or, rather, they vanish abruptly, the last two acts being entirely episodic and/or fantastic. As in ***Anthem,*** there is a "rise of the mental" as the exclusive focus of interest—in preparation for a special kind of climax.

The crux of that climax is simple: although Peer has no distinct ego, Solveig does. Having remained flawlessly loyal in her love, she is still waiting for Peer at the cabin. When Peer discovers this, he concludes, "*Here* was my empire!"—an empire he went his whole life without gaining. But to Peer's desperate, tormented question, Solveig has an answer:

> Peer Gynt
>
> Where was I, as myself, as the whole and the true?
> Where was I, with God's stamp on my forehead?
>
> Solveig
>
> Why, you
> Were in my faith, in my hope and in my love.

Solveig's constancy—combined with Peer's final acknowledgment of his own default—opens the way for Peer's potential redemption. Peer is saved from the Button-Molder, who warns that he will be back at "the final crossroads"—"and *then* we shall see."

As a psychological fantasy—the story of a mental progression—*Peer Gynt* needs a mental resolution, and has one. Peer's ultimate fate will be up to himself (and will depend on his mode of existential action). However, in the context of the story, his predicament has been resolved—primarily by an act not of his own mind, but of Solveig's.

The Climax of *Anthem*

The theme of an Ayn Rand novel is never left opaque, a mystery for literary scholars to divine. Typically, the abstract meaning of the events is expounded in a speech near the novel's end. A good example is ***The Fountainhead*** and Howard Roark's courtroom speech. The theme of ***The Fountainhead*** is "individualism versus collectivism, not in politics, but in man's soul"[25]—and Roark goes straight to the essence when he says: "the mind is an attribute of the individual. There is no such thing as a collective brain. There is no such thing as a collective thought."[26]

Ayn Rand wrote ***Anthem*** in the summer of 1937, as a break from her work on ***The Fountainhead.*** But ***Anthem,*** while admittedly much shorter than ***The Fountainhead,*** has the same theme. Why, then, write it at all?

The key to the answer lies in the concluding abstract expositions of the two novels.

Consider these two quotes from Roark's courtroom speech:

> The first right on earth is the right of the ego. Man's first duty is to himself. His moral law is never to place his prime goal within the persons of others. His moral obligation is to do what he wishes, provided his wish does not depend *primarily* upon other men. This includes the whole sphere of his creative faculty, his thinking, his work. But it does not include the sphere of the gangster, the altruist and the dictator.[27]

> Men have been taught that their first concern is to relieve the suffering of others. But suffering is a disease. Should one come upon it, one tries to give relief and assistance. To make that the highest test of virtue is to make suffering the most important part of life. Then man must wish to see others suffer—in order that he may be virtuous. Such is the nature of altruism.[28]

Observe that Roark is impersonal, arguing his case in general terms (in fact, he never uses the pronoun "I" until the last section of his speech, which deals with the specific charges against him). His wording is abstract ("right," "duty," "moral law," "obligation"), and he is methodical in relating his abstractions to one another in a structured argument. He is didactic: he argues his case in strictly literal language without metaphors; and in the first quote, he carefully delineates the scope of his main generalization. He is polemical: in the second quote, he points out a logical absurdity in the contrary position.

Compare Roark's style with the following two passages from Equality's statement in chapter eleven of ***Anthem.***

> I stand here on the summit of the mountain. I lift my head and I spread my arms. This, my body and spirit, this is the end of the quest. I wished to know the meaning of things. I am the meaning. I wished to find a warrant for being. I need no warrant for being, and no word of sanction upon my being. I am the warrant and the sanction.
>
> (94)

> Neither am I the means to any end others may wish to accomplish. I am not a tool for their use. I am not a servant of their needs. I am not a bandage for their wounds. I am not a sacrifice on their altars.
>
> (95)

Equality is saying the same things that Roark says. But whereas Roark is impersonal, Equality refers to himself in every sentence. His wording is concrete where Roark's is abstract; he is metaphorical where Roark is literal. His structure is broadly thematic where Roark's is intellectually involved. He is unconcerned with polemics. He asserts where Roark argues.

Whereas Roark is rhetorical, Equality is *poetic.*

Now consider the opening of Roark's speech:

> Thousands of years ago, the first man discovered how to make fire. He was probably burned at the stake he had taught his brothers to light. He was considered an evildoer who had dealt with a demon mankind dreaded. But thereafter men had fire to keep them warm, to cook their food, to light their caves. He had left them a gift they had not conceived and he had lifted darkness off the earth.[29]

Roark shows a strong consciousness of struggle, suffering, and injustice. He begins by discussing a martyr to the cause of the ego, as quoted above, then follows this example with three others: the inventor of the wheel, Prometheus and Adam. (This use of examples from history and legend is another indication of his didactic approach.)

Compare Roark's opening with Equality's:

> I am. I think. I will.
>
> My hands . . . My spirit . . . My sky . . . My forest . . . This earth of mine. . . .
>
> (94)

There is no consciousness here of struggle or suffering. Instead, Equality's words represent pure exaltation. They are the opening words of a hymn—of an *anthem.*

A hymn is a song of praise, glorification, and worship of the highest value to which a man dedicates himself. Traditionally, that value is God or one's country. But Equality's hymn is unique: its object is the ego.

The Hymn of the Collective Spirit, which Equality had been forced to sing for most of his life, was a travesty. What deserves a hymn, he has learned, is not a nonexistent collective spirit, but the only spirit there is and thus the true source of everything exalted: man's individual mind.

Those thoughts, desires, and actions which Equality had thought were evil because they came from "one" and not from "the many"—those were good, he now understands, because they came from *the one* and not from *many.* Being metaphysically an attribute of the individual, man's mind performs its proper function only when it is exercised independently. Then and only then can man achieve truth, goodness, success, happiness, and splendor.

What is actually aberrant, impotent, evil, and loathsome is not the individual mind, but the idea of collective thought, and what follows from such an idea. The word "we," Equality now knows, "must never be placed first within man's soul, else it becomes a monster, the root of all the evils on earth, the root of man's torture by men, and of an unspeakable lie" (96-97).

He knows this, but he does not say it at the beginning of his statement. A hymn evokes the emotion of contemplating the most sacred and perfect, and cannot focus on the negative. Equality's statement therefore opens with and maintains an ecstatic focus on his own exalted ego. Only toward the end does he deal with "the monster of 'We'" (97), dismissing it with the words "But I am done with this creed of corruption" (97).

An opening like Roark's, which dwelt on struggle and suffering, would be totally wrong for a hymn. Conversely, an opening like Equality's would be inappropriate for Roark's speech. Even if Roark *could* experience a state of rapture in the courtroom, it would be a presumption for him to display that emotion to the jury. Roark's speech is by its nature a forensic exercise: he is aiming to convince an audience. Therefore, his style is rhetorical as opposed to poetic. Befitting a hymn, Equality's style is just the opposite. A hymn cannot argue, only affirm.

The nature of Roark's and Equality's concluding statements is determined by the contexts. In ***The Fountainhead,*** Roark is on trial. The jury's verdict will resolve, one way or the other, the conflict between him and society, and his speech is his attempt to influence this outcome. In other words, Roark's speech, qua physical action, forms an integral part of the novel's climax.

This is no coincidence. A speech given *before* the climax could not expound on the abstract meaning of the novel as a whole, but only on some delimited part or aspect (as does Francisco d'Anconia's "money speech" in ***Atlas Shrugged***). More importantly, a speech given *after* the climax would not be an event of the story. Suppose Roark refused to testify at his trial, were acquitted on a technicality, and *then* gave his speech, say, to a convention of architects. The speech would be mere philosophical commentary on the novel's events, read for its abstract content alone. Roark would have turned literary scholar. To be more than just commentary—to serve a function in the resolution of the novel's conflicts, and thus in the plot—Roark's speech must be delivered before those conflicts are fully resolved.

The fact that Roark gives his speech in the context of conflict is what makes him stress the aspect of struggle and injustice, as illustrated by the martyrdom of Prometheus, Adam, and mankind's great inventors. The fate of these figures is a live issue for Roark, and their suffering an appropriate topic for his opening remarks—since he *himself* is still struggling and still a victim of the injustice inflicted on all men of independent mind. (He is on trial for an act of integrity and independence.)

Roark could not at this point deliver a hymn like Equality's: one does not experience an unmixed exaltation in the midst of a conflict situation.[30] Observe that Ayn Rand usually evokes such exaltation only in brief vignettes *after* the climax:[31] in ***The Fountainhead,*** when Dominique rises to Roark at the top of the Wynand Building; in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** when Galt stands with Dagny "on the highest accessible ledge of a mountain,"[32] declaring their return to the world. Similarly, when Equality formulates an exalted hymn, it is after—long after—all conflict has ceased. His hymn is the emotional summing up of a firmly established record of success, happiness, and splendor, and thus presupposes the post-conflict chapters dealing with his efficacy in the forest, his reunion with the Golden One, and his discovery of the house. Equality's hymn does constitute the resolution of a struggle—but that struggle is precisely his quest to understand the *cause* of his success and happiness.

Equality's hymn is a peculiar literary phenomenon. As exaltation, it follows, as it must, the end of conflict; as expository statement, it does not follow the climax, as it cannot (or it would be a mere appendage to the story). Rather, Equality's hymn *is* the climax.

What kind of climax can *follow,* rather than constitute, the end of existential conflict? A *mental* one. Equality's discovery of the concept "ego," and the hymn that is his statement about his discovery, are the mental resolution of his mental struggle.

Equality's hymn is not a diary entry; his words are words in his mind—they are *thoughts.* Observe that no immediate physical context is provided for the statement, beyond the words "I stand here on the summit of the mountain. I lift my head and I spread my arms" (94). This minimal "stage direction" has the same ascent motif as the concluding vignettes of Ayn Rand's two major novels, a motif congruent with the projection of exaltation. But the main function of the stage direction is to mark a break with the diary form of the novel,

i.e., to remove any implication that Equality's words are now physically written down. If he spreads his arms, he is not writing.

The most striking feature of Equality's hymn is of course the word "I." What was startling at the novel's beginning—Equality's use of the "singular 'we'"—has long since become familiar to the reader, just as a king's use of the royal "we" would become familiar. Now it is Equality's use of "I" that is startling.

But it is the hymn that is presented directly to the reader, not Equality's initial grasp of the word "I." This has taken place some time earlier. (At the beginning of chapter twelve, Equality relates that he saw the word in a book, and "when I understood this word, the book fell from my hands, and I wept" [98]—i.e., he did not immediately formulate an exalted hymn.)

Merely to show Equality grasping the word "I" would have been an inadequate resolution to his mental struggle. A Tarzan-like "Me Equality, you Golden One" would not have gone far enough beyond the Golden One's earlier statement that "We are one . . . alone . . . and only . . . and we love you who are one . . . alone . . . and only." And the climax has to involve much more than this. ***Anthem*** is not the story of a man who corrects a pronominal deficiency; it is the story of a man who discovers the true meaning of man's ego.

Observe that when Equality first uses the word "I," he does so to make a statement: "I am. I think. I will." This is just another way of saying, "It is *I* who am. It is *I* who think. It is *I* who will." The mind is an individual possession, and—as Equality goes on to identify—the glories of the human spirit flow from this ego, which is entitled to reverence.

By the nature of Equality's struggle, he must come to do exactly what he does: formulate a hymn to the ego. And by the nature of ***Anthem*** as a psychological fantasy, that hymn must be a mental event: *the ego identifying itself and its own glory.*

Anthem does not end purely in Equality's mind; the twelfth and last chapter reintroduces the existential context.

Equality first narrates how he discovered the word "I." He then explains this word to the Golden One, and she is finally able to tell him, "I love you." This resolves the last piece of unfinished business from the previous story.

Equality and the Golden One choose new names: Prometheus and Gaea—an act which serves as their official baptism as explicit individualists. (Their action has only this symbolic function in the novel, since nothing more is done with their new names, except that Equality (or Prometheus) uses "Gaea" in his one further reference to the Golden One. One might ask why they need the new names, since they have already given each other personal names—the Unconquered and the Golden One—to replace the collectivist tags they were known by in the city. But these latter are nicknames too personal to share with the world; they pertain only to the intimate context of mutual love. Having discovered the concept and meaning of "ego," Equality is ready to demarcate the spheres of public and private.)

Equality then turns to his future plans—he will "rebuild the achievements of the past and open the way to carry them further" (99)—and his tone now regains much of the hymnal quality of the penultimate chapter. Although his content is somewhat less spiritual and abstract, he is continuing his hymn to the ego. (Ayn Rand once said about ***Anthem*** that "The last two chapters are the actual anthem."[33])

When Equality reflects on human history and on how men came to lose the word "I" (he has learned about the past from the books in his library), his tone has at times a touch of bitterness, in keeping with the facts. But in the spirit of an anthem, his fundamental tone is triumphant and exalted—and when future conflict is projected, it is with assurance of victory: "And the day will come when I shall break all the chains of the earth, and raze the cities of the enslaved, and my home will become the capital of a world where each man will be free to exist for his own sake" (104).

Appropriately for a psychological fantasy written on the primacy-of-existence premise, ***Anthem*** ends with physical action—projected by the hero's mind. Having discovered the concept and meaning of man's ego, Equality plans to translate his new worship of "I" into material existence, practically and symbolically.

He will establish a new world based on individualism. And just as the creed of collectivism was cut in marble over the portals of the Palace of the World Council, so Equality will cut in stone over the portals of his home "the word which is to be my beacon and my banner" (104): EGO.

Anthem as a Poem

Anthem, Ayn Rand once wrote in a letter, "has the same relation to ***The Fountainhead*** as the preliminary sketches which artists draw for their future big canvases. I wrote it while working on ***The Fountainhead***—it has the same theme, spirit and intention, although in quite a different form."[34]

The essential difference between a sketch and a "big canvas" is the former's freedom from a concern with *detail.*[35] In this regard, consider Ayn Rand's definition

of art as "a selective re-creation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value-judgments."[36] For instance, every aspect of a painting, from choice of theme and subject to the last strand of every brushstroke, is selected by the artist to express his view of man's relation to the universe. (Even when the artist does *not* fully control his brushstrokes, as with Rembrandt or Van Gogh, *that* is a means of expressing his view.) But there are certain forms of art which are anomalous: they present not a full, but only a partial, re-creation of reality. A sketch is one example—it has no brushstrokes.

Neither does ***Anthem.*** As Leonard Peikoff puts it, the novel shows "relatively little attempt to re-create perceptual, conversational, or psychological detail."[37]

Compare the scene where Equality confronts the scholars with the scene in the first chapter of ***The Fountainhead*** where Roark meets with the Dean. First the openings of the two scenes, starting with ***Anthem***:

> We saw nothing as we entered, save the sky in the great windows, blue and glowing. Then we saw the Scholars who sat around a long table; they were as shapeless clouds huddled at the rise of the great sky. There were men whose famous names we knew, and others from distant lands whose names we had not heard. We saw a great painting on the wall over their heads, of the twenty illustrious men who had invented the candle.
>
> All the heads of the Council turned to us as we entered. These great and wise of the earth did not know what to think of us, and they looked upon us with wonder and curiosity, as if we were a miracle.
>
> (68-69)

> The Dean's office looked like a chapel, a pool of dreamy twilight fed by one tall window of stained glass. The twilight flowed in through the garments of stiff saints, their arms contorted at the elbows. A red spot of light and a purple one rested respectively upon two genuine gargoyles squatting at the corners of a fireplace that had never been used. A green spot stood in the center of a picture of the Parthenon, suspended over the fireplace.
>
> When Roark entered the office, the outlines of the Dean's figure swam dimly behind his desk, which was carved like a confessional. He was a short, plumpish gentleman whose spreading flesh was held in check by an indomitable dignity.
>
> "Ah, yes, Roark," he smiled. "Do sit down, please."
>
> Roark sat down. The Dean entwined his fingers on his stomach and waited for the plea he expected. No plea came. The Dean cleared his throat.[38]

In one passage, a room has "great windows," a "long table," and a painting on a wall. In the other, a room has "a tall window of stained glass," with curtains representing the garments of stiff, decorative saints, which have "arms contorted at the elbows;" there is a desk "carved like a confessional," and, beneath a picture, an unused fireplace flanked by squatting gargoyles. The first room is lighted by the blue and glowing sky in the windows. In the second room, twilight flows in through the stained glass and the saints' garments—and in addition there is a "red spot of light and a purple one" resting on the gargoyles, and a green spot on the picture.

In other words, the Roark passage, while only slightly longer than the Equality one, provides much more detail.

Equality's scholars are described only metaphorically—"they were as shapeless clouds huddled at the rise of the great sky"—and their elevated status is merely asserted: "men whose famous names we knew." By contrast, Roark's Dean is short and plumpish, his figure appears to swim dimly in the twilight, his spreading flesh is "held in check by an indomitable dignity." The last touch also indicates (and undercuts) his elevated status, as does his pompous greeting—"Ah, yes, Roark"—and the action of his hands: "The Dean entwined his fingers on his stomach and waited for the plea he expected."

As a function of the greater amount of detail, the sentences in the Roark passage are more closely integrated in terms of their material content than the sentences in the Equality passage. For instance, when the Dean's figure "swam dimly," this builds on the "pool of dreamy twilight" entering the room through the stained glass. Similarly, when the scholars "were as shapeless clouds huddled at the rise of the great sky," this builds on "the sky in the great windows, blue and glowing." But in the first case, the connection is concrete; in the second, metaphorical and abstract.

The Dean and the scholars are equally baffled by the hero. But the Dean's bafflement is conveyed by a physical detail: he "cleared his throat." The implication of this—that Roark acts unlike what the Dean expects and thus brings him out of balance—depends on previous detail: "The Dean entwined his fingers on his stomach and waited for the plea he expected. No plea came." And here again, the implication of a self-satisfied mediocrity who would enjoy the supplications of an ostensible inferior depends on the previous detail about "a short, plumpish gentleman whose spreading flesh was held in check by an indomitable dignity," and on the pompous "Ah, yes, Roark." In other words, as an indication of his bafflement, the Dean's throat-clearing is woven into a rich tapestry of concrete, material detail.

By contrast, the scholars' bafflement is first simply asserted—"These great and wise of the earth did not know what to think of us"—then described in general terms—"and they looked upon us with wonder and curiosity"—followed by a metaphor unconnected to the material description—"as if we were a miracle."

Now compare the following passages from later in the same two scenes, first from ***The Fountainhead,*** then from ***Anthem.***

> [The Dean speaking:] "There is a treasure mine in every style of the past. We can only choose from the great masters. Who are we to improve upon them? We can only attempt, respectfully, to repeat."
>
> "Why?" asked Howard Roark.
>
> No, thought the Dean, no, he hasn't said anything else; it's a perfectly innocent word; he's not threatening me.
>
> "But it's self-evident!" said the Dean.[39]
>
> "You have worked on this alone?" asked International 1-5537.
>
> "Yes," we answered.
>
> "What is not done collectively cannot be good," said International 1-5537.
>
> (73)

The Dean and the scholar make essentially the same point.[40] But whereas the scholar goes straight to the essence in a short line of dialogue, the Dean argues at length (and the full conversation goes on for pages).

The Dean's fear at Roark's simple "Why?"—the fear of a man who has never looked at reality directly and who senses that his mind would now be impotent to do so—is equivalent to the scholars' terror of Equality's light in the scene from ***Anthem*** (see above, page 94). But while their running from the table is a naked, violent dramatization of the issue, the Dean's evasive "But it's self-evident!" is simply one conversational detail among many.

Anthem has no such details. As a psychological fantasy, it *cannot* have them.

Had ***Anthem*** presented a full re-creation of reality, the sheer force of accumulated material information would have displaced the focus from the hero's mind. To keep the *mental* focus, a psychological fantasy can re-create reality only in terms of bare essentials. Ayn Rand therefore has to build her edifice of bricks, but not with mortar.

The counterpart to ***Anthem*** is again *Peer Gynt,* which Ibsen tellingly called "a dramatic poem." Like a sketch, a poem is not a full re-creation of reality; it does not even have to tell a story (although it can); in Ayn Rand's words, "its basic attributes are theme and style."[41] For Ibsen, the poetic means of avoiding full-fledged realism were readily at hand: he was writing in rhymed verse.[42] Ayn Rand had to achieve the same sketch-like effect in prose; she had to present (to use her own description of ***Anthem***) "a long series of incidents—in an abbreviated, essentialized, almost 'impressionistic' form."[43]

Anthem, as Ayn Rand herself said, is a prose poem.[44]

And also of interest, for the 1946 American edition of ***Anthem,*** Ayn Rand introduced the unconventional typographic device of putting a blank line between the paragraphs. (I have dispensed with these lines in quoting the novel.) This visual cue makes the paragraphs appear less as integral parts of a continuous fabric of representation and more as thematically separated units—precisely like the stanzas of a poem.

Conclusion

In 1946, answering a fan letter about ***Anthem,*** Ayn Rand wrote: "I don't really think that you knew, while reading the book, how 'it would turn out' after the escape of the protagonists. Are you sure that you know it now? Read Chapter XI again."[45]

Presumably the fan had foreseen merely that Equality would in the end learn the word "I." But anyone would guess as much. We all know the *word* "I"; and Ayn Rand did not write ***Anthem*** just to remind us that it exists. She wrote the book to tell us that man's ego is sacred.

Writes Leonard Peikoff:

> There have been plenty of egoists in human history, and there have been plenty of worshipers, too. The egoists were generally cynical "realists" (à la Hobbes), who despised morality; the worshipers, by their own statement, were out of this world. . . . Ayn Rand's concept of an "anthem to the ego" throws out this vicious dichotomy. Her Objectivist philosophy integrates facts with values—in this instance, the actual nature of man with an exalted and secular admiration for it.[46]

This is the intellectual genius of ***Anthem.***

Early in ***Anthem,*** Equality recalls an incident from when he was ten years old: the execution by burning of a man who had found and spoken the Unspeakable Word.

> There was a thin thread of blood running from the corner of their mouth, but their lips were smiling. And a monstrous thought came to us then, which has never left us. We had heard of Saints. There are the Saints of Labor, and the Saints of the Councils, and the Saints of the Great Rebirth. But we had never seen a Saint nor what the likeness of a Saint should be. And we thought then, standing in the square, that the likeness of a Saint was the face we saw before us in the flames, the face of the Transgressor of the Unspeakable Word.
>
> (50)

The word "saint" conveys an exalted moral perfection; and this incident is the first indication Equality gets (in the novel) that the true source of man's highest values is different from what he has been taught. But even at

the age of ten, Equality must have had some implicit grasp of this fact, for him to see the likeness of a saint in the face of the transgressor. And the transgressor must have recognized this grasp in the young boy's face, to choose Equality as his heir.

> Perhaps it had only seemed to us. But it seemed to us that the eyes of the Transgressor had chosen us from the crowd and were looking straight upon us. . . . And it seemed as if these eyes were trying to tell us something through the flames, to send into our eyes some word without sound. And it seemed as if these eyes were begging us to gather that word and not to let it go from us and from the earth.
>
> (51)

In Russia, at the age of ten or less, Ayn Rand read a children's biography of Catherine the Great, and one scene in particular impressed her. The young Catherine attends a party given for the girls of the German nobility. The hostess brings in a fortune teller, points to the reigning favorite among the girls, a prominent young princess, and asks, "Can you foretell her future? Do you see a crown on her brow?" The fortune teller looks at the girl and says "No," then turns to the obscure Catherine and says, "But on this girl's forehead I see the mark of two crowns."

Ayn Rand did not need a fortune teller or the saint of the pyre to tell her she was a child of destiny. She later remembered thinking, "I am like Catherine. My forehead is marked in the same way, only they don't see it."[47]

We can see it now.

Like Equality, Ayn Rand escaped to freedom from a collectivist hell.

Like Equality, she discovered, and told the world, the meaning and glory of man's ego.

And like Equality, she told us in ***Anthem.***[48]

Notes

1. Some have speculated about possible sources of inspiration for this idea of Ayn Rand's. The most likely source is the standard communist slogans of Soviet Russia in Ayn Rand's youth. In her first novel, *We the Living,* which accurately portrays life in early post-revolutionary Russia, a villain delivers a cliché-studded propaganda speech in which he says: "What, then, are the standards of our new humanity? The first and basic one is that we have lost a word from our language, the most dangerous, the most insidious, the most evil of human words: the word 'I.' We have outgrown it. 'We' is the slogan of the future. The Collective stands in our hearts where that old monster—'self'—had stood." Ayn Rand, *We the Living* (New York: Signet sixtieth anniversary paperback edition, 1996), 436.
2. Ayn Rand, *The Art of Fiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers,* ed. Tore Boeckmann (New York: Plume, 2000), 37.
3. On the collective's function being to explain the hero's predicament, see Rand, *Art of Fiction,* 37.
4. Leonard Peikoff, introduction to fiftieth anniversary American edition to *Anthem,* by Ayn Rand (New York: Signet fiftieth anniversary paperback edition, 1995), v.
5. I do not mean that the average person finds it hard to associate the word "I" with his own body and mental processes, as distinct from other people's. But this is not the same as forming a conceptual grasp of one's mind as an autonomous mental entity. Observe that many people lack even the inner *experience* of an enduring, autonomous self, which leads them to "identity crises." (If they do have an explicit concept of the ego, in the deeper meaning of the term, it is mainly because they have been told about the phenomenon.) A more superficial knowledge of one's own individuality—the kind which Equality is shown to possess from the start—*would* suffice for some kind of use of the word "I." But this would not constitute a grasp of everything implied by that concept—which is what Equality reaches when he does learn the word in the climax of *Anthem.* To say that he *could have* learned the word more easily, with a more superficial understanding, is not to pose a valid objection against the novel's superior dramatic structure.
6. Ayn Rand, *For the New Intellectual* (New York: Random House, 1961; Signet paperback edition, 1963), 64.
7. Rand, *We the Living,* 89.
8. The paragraph is a compressed stylization of the depiction of life in Soviet Russia provided in *We the Living* and based on Ayn Rand's first-hand experience. See also Dina Garmong, "*We the Living* and the Rosenbaum Family Letters," and Tara Smith, "Forbidding Life to Those Still Living" in *Essays on Ayn Rand's* We the Living, ed. Robert Mayhew (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004).
9. Ayn Rand, "Basic Principles of Literature," in her *The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature,* revised edition (New York: Signet, 1975), 85.
10. On *Anthem* as plotless, see Rand, *Art of Fiction,* 36-37.
11. Aristotle [?], *Magna Moralia,* Book II, ch. 15, 1213a13-26. (Translation is from Jonathan Barnes, ed. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised*

Oxford Translation, vol. 2 [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984], 1920.) I owe this quote to Allan Gotthelf's lecture "Love and Philosophy: Aristotelian vs. Platonic" (audio cassettes, Second Renaissance, 1998). Gotthelf's excellent discussion contains much that is relevant for understanding Equality and Liberty's love relationship, and any love relationship.

12. I call it the "main" rather than "only" conflict, since in chapter one there is a brief dispute between Equality and his friend International 4-8818 about whether to tell the councils about the tunnel. This dispute is resolved on the spot in Equality's favor.

13. Quoted in Harry Binswanger, "Introduction," in *The Mysterious Valley,* by Maurice Champagne (Lafayette, CO: The Atlantean Press, 1994), xii.

14. The scholars are here reminiscent of the real-life scholars who refused to look through Galileo's telescope.

15. Rand, *We the Living,* 42.

16. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Random House, 1957; Signet thirty-fifth anniversary paperback edition, 1992), 619.

17. From the question period (in which Ayn Rand took part) following lecture 11 of Leonard Peikoff's 1976 "Philosophy of Objectivism" course. See also Rand, *Art of Fiction,* 165; Ayn Rand, *The Art of Nonfiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers,* Robert Mayhew, ed. (New York: Plume, 2001), 126; and Robert Mayhew, "Kira Argounova Laughed: Humor and Joy in *We the Living*" in Mayhew, *Essays on* We the Living.

18. Mayhew, "Kira Argounova Laughed," 308.

19. Ayn Rand, "Of Living Death," in her *The Voice of Reason: Essays in Objectivist Thought,* ed. Leonard Peikoff (New York: New American Library, 1989; Meridian paperback edition, 1990), 54. The phrase is italicized in the original.

20. Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943; Signet fiftieth anniversary paperback edition, 1993), 377.

21. I am not implying that in writing *Anthem* Ayn Rand was influenced by *Peer Gynt.* But the comparison is nevertheless instructive.

22. My translation, as are all further quotes from *Peer Gynt.*

23. For a discussion of the primacy of consciousness—and its opposite, the primacy of existence—see Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1991), 17-23. On the connection between the primacy of consciousness and insanity, see Leonard Peikoff, "Madness and Modernism," *The Intellectual Activist* 8, no. 6 (November 1994): 1-15.

24. In Equality's statement in chapter eleven of *Anthem,* some lines could be taken to imply a primacy-of-consciousness premise, especially the following: "Whatever road I take, the guiding star is within me; the guiding star and the loadstone which point the way. They point in but one direction. They point to me" (95). In 1961, when Ayn Rand included Equality's statement in *For the New Intellectual,* these and some similar lines were omitted. Rand, *New Intellectual,* 64-65. However, the present discussion concerns how Equality's ego has been shaped by his *actions* in the novel—and in these, there is no hint of the primacy of consciousness.

25. Ayn Rand, *New Intellectual,* 68. The word "versus" is italicized in the original.

26. Rand, *Fountainhead,* 680.

27. Rand, *Fountainhead,* 683.

28. Rand, *Fountainhead,* 682.

29. Rand, *Fountainhead,* 679.

30. Or at least an Ayn Rand hero would not. The case might be different for someone whose metaphysical worldview celebrates conflict as such.

31. There are exceptions to this rule. For instance, in *The Fountainhead,* Ayn Rand describes Howard Roark and Dominique Francon's sexual encounters, which culminate in moments that "swept into a denial of all suffering, into its antithesis, into ecstasy." Later, Gail Wynand talks to Dominique about Steven Mallory's statue of her, and says, "It's startling to see the same elements used in two compositions with opposite themes. Everything about you in that statue is the theme of exaltation. But your own theme is suffering." Rand, *Fountainhead,* 283, 438-39. However, sex and art are by their nature metaphysical; they relate man to all of existence. Thus, the emotional content of a sex act or a sculpture is independent of any particular existential context. One may celebrate a benevolent universe through sex, or contemplate it in art, even in the midst of struggle. In fact, that is part of the purpose of sex and art.

32. Rand, *Atlas Shrugged,* 1073.

33. Michael S. Berliner, ed., *Letters of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1995), 336.

34. Berliner, *Letters,* 314.

35. Thus Ayn Rand wrote in a letter: "Everything I said in *The Fountainhead* is in *Anthem,* though in a briefer, less detailed form." Berliner, *Letters,* 276.

36. Ayn Rand, "The Psycho-Epistemology of Art," *Romantic Manifesto,* 19.
37. Peikoff, "Introduction," viii.
38. Rand, *Fountainhead,* 20.
39. Rand, *Fountainhead,* 23.
40. Later in the Roark-Dean conversation, the Dean appeals even more directly to collectivism: "The proper creative process is a slow, gradual, anonymous, collective one, in which each man collaborates with all the others and subordinates himself to the standards of the majority." Rand, *Fountainhead,* 24.
41. Rand, "Basic Principles of Literature," 81.
42. The *scenography* of any production of *Peer Gynt* must similarly avoid a distracting realism. Before one production, at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, the scenographer said that *Peer Gynt* had to be "a journey through Norway," to which the director correctly replied, "*Peer Gynt* is no journey through Norway, but a journey through a man's mind." See Hans Jacob Nilsen, "*Peer Gynt*—eit anti-romantisk verk," in *Omkring* Peer Gynt, Otto Hageberg, ed. (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1967), 118.
43. Rand, *Art of Fiction,* 44.
44. Question period following the last lecture of Ayn Rand's 1969 course on non-fiction writing (transcripts of which are in the Ayn Rand Archives). Much earlier, in a 1946 letter to Rose Wilder Lane, Ayn Rand classified *Anthem* straightforwardly as "a poem." She did the same in a 1947 letter to Richard Mealand. Berliner, *Letters,* 293, 372.
45. Berliner, *Letters,* 351.
46. Peikoff, "Introduction," vii.
47. Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).
48. I wish to thank Robert Mayhew, Dina Schein Garmong, and Kristi Hall for their comments on earlier drafts of this chapter, and Michael Berliner of the Ayn Rand Archives for providing helpful information.

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Bibliographical Note

Unless otherwise indicated, quotes from Ayn Rand's *Anthem* will be followed by page number(s) in parentheses in the text and not by an endnote. Pagination refers to the fiftieth anniversary paperback edition (New York: Signet, 1995).

In some chapters, the author quotes from, and refers to information contained in, a series of biographical interviews that Ayn Rand gave in 1960-1961, the tapes and transcripts of which are in the Ayn Rand Archives. References will appear in the endnotes as: Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

Mimi Reisel Gladstein (essay date 2007)

SOURCE: Gladstein, Mimi Reisel. "Ayn Rand's Cinematic Eye." In *Ayn Rand's* Atlas Shrugged: *A Philosophical and Literary Companion,* edited by Edward W. Younkins, pp. 109-20. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007.

[*In the following essay, Gladstein studies Rand's use of "the cinematic eye," a result of her early training in the film industry, in* Atlas Shrugged, *stressing how she employs the narrative lens to highlight the sexualized*

female body—that of Dagny Taggart—in the novel; as such, according to the critic, it is "the traditional male gaze of the camera eye" that Rand privileges in her text.]

A young girl with large, dark, soulful eyes sits in the darkened movie theater, her gaze intent on the screen. Nothing on the screen escapes her keen examination—the angle of the shot—the perspective of the camera eye. Outside the theater is the drab and dreary world of the Soviet Republics, but on the screen is a vision of a world Alisa Rosenbaum could aspire to, a world she was to create, destroy, and rebuild in her own artistic vision. Writing for the screen became her goal.

By the time that young girl had become Ayn Rand, world famous novelist, Alisa Rosenbaum had achieved her goal. We are all familiar with the story of how the inexperienced young woman, armed only with a Remington Rand typewriter, and speaking the language inexpertly, landed a job with a titan of the film world, Cecil B. De Mille. Her first job in the film industry was, ironically for this atheist, as an extra in the religious film *King of Kings.* Subsequently, she was to work in the movie industry in a variety of capacities. Rand wrote synopses and suggestions for how to adapt properties to screen; she then worked in the wardrobe department of RKO before becoming a screenwriter. Her first income from writing in Hollywood came from selling her original screenplay ***Red Pawn.*** For many years Rand labored as a reader for both Paramount and MGM. At one point, she was under contract to Hal Wallis for whom she wrote the screenplays for ***Love Letters*** and ***You Came Along.*** Unlike a number of the big name fiction writers who first made their names by publishing short stories and novels and then reluctantly went to Hollywood, Ayn Rand's initial destination, once she got to this country, was American's movie capital. And, whereas writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner are on record as having "despised the collaborative hack-work" of movies (Mandal 13), Rand's concept of film was affirmative. For her Hollywood was the incarnation and culmination of the American Dream.

The role of the celluloid world in Ayn Rand's life cannot be overemphasized. Speaking of the importance of movies in her life, Ayn Rand remembers that as a young woman she "began to see movies every night. That was one of my happiest periods in Russia, in that it was almost as if I had a private avenue of seeing the world outside." One image from that period that remained engraved on her inner artistic eye is a shot of "the New York skyline, usually long shots, and I would sit through two shows just to catch it. It was just a glimpse but seemed completely incredible. I can't tell you how glamorous it was at that distance. My enthusiasm for America was formed then" ([***Russian Writings on Hollywood***] 1999, 9). Not only did Rand's goal of going to the United States form then, but writing for the screen served as her elementary school as a creative artist. Though her greatest successes as an author came first from writing for the theatre and then as a novelist, evidence of her basic film training are sprinkled through her works, nowhere more tellingly than in her magnum opus ***Atlas Shrugged.*** From beginning to end, in what was to become her final novel, there is evidence of Ayn Rand's cinematic eye.

Substantiation of the influence of Rand's movie training appears in smaller and larger measure throughout ***Atlas Shrugged.*** For illustration, let us begin with how Dagny Taggart, the novel's protagonist and heroine, is introduced. It is decidedly cinematic, using Classical Hollywood cinema conventions. As yet not identified to the reader, Dagny is presented in what film texts refer to as an "establishing shot." She is framed at a train window. Rand directs the staging of the scene with her description of Dagny's position, "head thrown back, one leg stretched across to the empty seat before her" (12). A bleak tone is set as the camera eye focuses on the train window that frames "empty darkness" with only occasional flashes of light, thus establishing both the dreariness outside and Dagny's comfort within her own train space. Then, with a typical screen convention of the period, our eye is directed, not at the thrown back head, but at that stretched out leg. Laura Mulvey has identified it as the masculine gaze of the camera eye, what other feminist film critics describe as the "to-be-looked-at" presentation of women in film.[1] Marlene Dietrich, one of Rand's favorite actresses, was often presented in just this way as erotic object for both the audience and the male characters in the narrative of the film through a close-up of her famous legs. Thus, we readers, through Rand's direction of the narrative eye, which is analogous with the camera eye, move from a long shot to a close-up, not of Dagny, but of her leg. "Her leg, sculptured by the tight sheen of the stocking, its long line running straight over an arched instep, to the tip of a foot in a high-heeled pump, had a feminine elegance . . ." (12). In this time of short shorts, mini-skirts, and film nudity, the sight of a leg does not have the same erotic impact that it did in the period of Rand's film training. But, when ***Atlas Shrugged*** was written Rand employed that film shorthand for female sexuality to introduce her heroine.

Rand's focus on Dagny's legs is but one instance of how her Hollywood training of seeing women through the masculine perspective of the camera eye affected her text. Throughout the novel, Dagny is described from the viewpoint of the male gaze, often with the emphasis on her legs. When Dagny and Francisco climb a cliff as teenagers, "he stood looking at her" and what he sees, besides "her shoulder showing through the torn shirt" is "her long, scratched, sunburned legs" (97). A beautiful

woman, with her clothes partially torn off, is an iconic image for a movie poster. Even when the point of view is female, the emphasis is on what a man would see and find appealing. Dagny's mother focuses on her "long show girl legs" (102). The text is quite explicit, as it describes Dagny from Mrs. Taggart's perspective, that what is being presented is the girl/woman as she would be on display for male delectation. The scene is her debut, shorthand for being put "on the marriage market." Seeing Dagny all dressed up for her first ball, her mother stares at her with "shocked admiration." She thinks that "Dagny's bearing seemed almost indecent, because this was the way a woman would have faced a ballroom centuries ago, when the act of displaying one's half-naked body for the admiration of men was an act of daring . . ." (103).

Dagny's entrance at the Rearden anniversary party is presented from a decidedly male camera eye.

> It was a black dress with a bodice that fell as a cape over one arm and shoulder, leaving the other bare; the naked shoulder was the gown's only ornament. . . . The black dress seemed excessively revealing—because it was astonishing to discover that the lines of her shoulder were fragile and beautiful, and that the diamond band on the wrist of her naked arm gave her the most feminine of all aspects: the look of being chained.
>
> (136)

What but the male gaze would find the look of being chained the most attractive feminine aspect?

The masculine gaze of the camera eye is also evident in the scene of Dagny and Hank's first coupling. "He stood looking down at her naked body" the narrative explains (252). But then, "She knew that what she felt with the skin of her arms was the cloth of his shirt" (252). A standard of the masculine perspective is that female is nude, but the male isn't. Why does he have a shirt on while she is naked? The next morning, her nude body is meticulously described. "She looked at the glowing bands on the skin of her arm, spaced like bracelets from her wrist to her shoulder. They were strips of sunlight from the Venetian blinds on the window of an unfamiliar room" (253). The narration makes us aware of "the curve of her naked shoulder," but when the camera eye turns to Hank, it is on his eyes and his face. He dresses, and again, there is no description of his naked body—but instead what we view is his buttoning his shirt, and buckling the belt of his slacks. After he, fully dressed, gives her his "what I feel is contempt" and "it's depravity" speech, "She threw the blanket off with a stressed, deliberate sweep of her arm. She stood up. She saw her clothes on the floor and kicked them aside. She stood facing him, naked" (255). The influence of the celluloid world's traditional presentation of sexuality is blatant. The man is dressed; the woman is naked. It was not till after Rand's death that male nudity became a staple of world cinema.[2] Also at work in this scene is a classical cinematic technique called the shot/reverse shot formation. This formation is the cinematic equivalent of what Rand achieves by the changing points-of-view in her narrative. We are moved from the female to the male perspective and back. First we see Dagny from Hank's perspective; then we see her and then him through her eyes, though priority is given to identification with the male gaze. The camera accomplishes this by shooting first over the shoulder of one character and thus showing what that person would be seeing and then moving to the opposite direction so that the viewing subject becomes the viewed, thus we have a shot and then the reverse of that shot.[3] Rand's narrator presents these scenes in that manner.

Once, when Nathaniel Branden asked Rand why there was only one heroic woman, and variations on the heroic male in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** she responded that the novel was her fantasy, indicating that it was a woman's and not a man's wish fulfillment.[4] Still, her many years in Hollywood seem to have affected even her dramatization of a woman's fantasy, and though Dagny is the protagonist of ***Atlas Shrugged,*** the narrative, or as I argue, cinematic focus is on Dagny's body and not on the objects of her desire. In a love scene between her and Hank, Dagny looks down at herself and a strap of her slip had broken, the slip hanging diagonally from her one shoulder. Hank is "looking at her breast under the transparent film of the blouse. She raised her hand to adjust the strap. He slapped her hand down" (278). She again smiles mockingly and walks across the room. Then we are thrust into his perspective as he looks at her, at a "contrast he liked—the severity of her clothes, and the half-naked body, the railroad executive who was a woman he owned" (279). Again, the narrative cries for a shot/reverse shot formation, although the camera eye is not on Hank's body except for as it appears in his clothing. A fantasy, written from the perspective of woman, but for the strong influence of how Hollywood visualized sexuality, would have presented a more vivid portrayal of male physicality.

Lest I be accused of anachronistic critiquing, in not understanding the conventions of the presentation of male and female nudity of the times, let me argue that Rand breaks many of the contemporary conventions of sexuality. Rand's revolutionary and egalitarian presentation of female sexuality and the interconnection of mind and body are vital to what is so groundbreaking about this novel. Conventional morality would have categorized Dagny, who had pre-marital sexual relations starting as a teenager, then becomes the mistress of a married man, and while in that relationship begins another sexual relationship, as a villainess or fallen woman. Since Rand defied all such conformist thinking to make Dagny heroic and admirable, and since this was, after all a fe-

male fantasy, why is it that the men are not presented as the objects of her gaze in the same manner as she is presented? My supposition, in the context of this essay, is that she was so influenced by the traditional male gaze of the camera eye, that this is how she saw the love scenes. Woman as she appears to men is the perspective of the movie camera and thus the narrational perspective of Rand's presentation.

That Rand saw the narrative perspective of the writer as analogous to the camera eye is validated by what she taught about fiction writing. Erika Holzer remembers Rand telling her that in writing she had to be like a camera, not trying to describe everything in a scene, but being selective, and picking out specific things to focus on.[5] This awareness of the correlation of the eye of the author and the lens of the camera also evidences itself in how Rand depicts many of the scenes of the novel. Possible camera angles and focus suggest themselves throughout ***Atlas Shrugged.*** For example: the long shot is obviously called for when the narrator explains: "Rearden stood at the other end of the long room, looking at her." Then the camera switches to his perspective: "He watched her as she approached, but he did not step forward to meet her" (137). Another character who is introduced in long shot is Francisco. "In the lighted doorway, the length of the room between them, he saw the tall, arrogant figure of a man who had paused for a moment before entering" (140). In this case, it is Rearden whose extended eye defines the camera shot. Often a scene is ended in a long shot. After Dagny and Hank find the discarded motor at the ruins of the Twentieth Century Motor Company, Dagny looks down at the motor and then out to the country. The chapter ends as Hank looked out "Far below, in the valley, in the gathering night, there trembled a few pale smears which were the light of tallow candles" (291).

Earlier in this essay, Rand's comment about the long shot of the New York skyline as a key image in her young life is cited. In ***Atlas Shrugged,*** that iconographic cinematic image appears and reappears throughout. The lights of New York City are both synecdoche and metonymy for the city, the country, and civilization. When those lights go out, Atlas has shrugged and the building can begin again. One of the final long or panoramic shots in the novel is when, viewed from the airplane over New York City, there is that moment when the occupants of the plane realize "that the lights of New York had gone out" (1158).

On the other hand, Rand's narrative is often quite specific about when a close-up is called for. In the scene when Dagny encounters Hugh Akston in a diner in the wilds of Wyoming, Rand seems to be directing an extreme close-up of the cigarette he offers Dagny. First a medium shot is indicated: "She held the small remnant to the light of the dashboard, looking for the name of the brand." In this scene the camera eye includes Dagny as she looks at the cigarette. But then the camera zooms in tight to the cigarette. Only an extreme close-up would be appropriate to show that "Stamped in gold on the thin, white paper stood the sign of the dollar." (332)

Perhaps, the most important close-up in ***Atlas Shrugged*** happens at the beginning of Part III, A is A. This is a climactic moment in the novel when Dagny finally has an answer to the question, "Who is John Galt?" Dagny opens her eyes and sees, "sunlight, green leaves and a man's face." (701) The narration clearly directs the focus to Galt's face in close-up. It is a "face that bore no mark of pain or fear or guilt" and the text describes explicitly, mouth, cheekbones, eyes, but mostly the look. To portray such a look would be a tall order for an actor, but Rand makes it clear that the camera eye should remain on the face for some time before it moves back for a medium shot as Dagny becomes aware of Galt's body also.[6]

Camera is the perfect tool through which to present the scene of the inauguration of the John Galt line (238). "The long line of boxcars stretched off into the distance, in spaced rectangular links, like a spinal cord." This could be accomplished through a long shot, using a crane and interposing those views with close-ups and medium shots of the crowd and Dagny and Hank and Eddie. After Eddie cuts the ribbon "Then the engine was gone, and he stood looking across the crowded platform that kept appearing and vanishing as the freight cars clicked past him" (239). The narration continues describing the movement:

> Things streaked past—a water tank, a tree, a shanty, a grain silo. They had a windshield-wiper motion: they were rising, describing a curve and dropping back. The telegraph wires ran a race with the train, rising and falling from pole to pole, in an even rhythm, like the cardiograph record of a stead heartbeat written across the sky.
>
> (240)

That Rand had film in mind is manifest in the text. Dagny describes the people that they pass as the Galt line hurtles 100 miles an hour. "But they went by so fast that she could not grasp their meaning until, like the squares of a movie film, brief flashes blended into a whole and she understood it" (242).

The visual, a series of those "squares of movie film" that Rand alludes to, is what the trip is made of. For example: "The cliffs ahead were a bright liquid gold. Strips of shadow were lengthening in the valleys below. The sun was descending to the peaks in the west. They were going west and up, toward the sun" (246). If it weren't a movie still, it could be a picture postcard. Another such instance is at the end of the ride, when Dagny has shaken hands with all the stockholders of the John

Galt Line: "Above her head, above the heads of the crowd, the letters TT on a silver shield were hit by the last ray of a sinking sun" (248), a perfect fade out frame before the business of the next scene. Color, speed, and scenic grandeur are all part of Rand's text, setting visual instructions for how these scenes should be photographed. Rand's description of this technique, the many squares of film blending together to achieve meaning, resembles montage. Obviously, she had thought about it. D.W. Griffith, whose work she admired, is a key figure in the Montage Movement. Perhaps she studied the technique at the State Institute for Cinematography in Leningrad. The Montage Movement was influential in Soviet filmmaking during the 1920s.

In her study of the effect of film on the writing of three American major writers, Hemingway, Faulkner, and Fitzgerald, Somdatta Mandal explains the differences between the traditional novelistic perspective and a more film-influenced way of writing. She notes that the novelist's eye is usually away from the object and towards the eye of the observer, a mode usually practiced by stream-of-consciousness novelists. "On the other hand, there are distinct occasions when the novelist's focus is more on the object as something seen, and therefore closer to the cinematographic form" (138). This is the case with Rand in many sections of ***Atlas Shrugged.*** Often, characters are presented as something seen and she even gives instructions as to how they are to be seen. There are also some specific references to film in the text, such as the montage allusion above and in a scene where Francisco is described as "looking up as if he were watching the scenes of a movie farce unrolling on the ceiling" (122).

Another aspect of Rand's cinematic perspective may have been influenced by the time she spent working in the wardrobe department of RKO.[7] Her writing reflects a keen sense of costume, particularly how the costume is perceived by the onlooker. At the press conference before the John Galt line is inaugurated the text reads: "She [Dagny] wore a dark blue suit with a white blouse, beautifully tailored, suggesting an air of formal almost military elegance" (233). For the first run of the train Dagny wears "blue slacks and shirt" (237). Not just the women, but also the men's wardrobe is carefully depicted. When Hank and Dagny are riding together on the first trip on the John Galt line, his clothing is very precisely described:

> His tall figure in the single gray of slacks and shirt looked as if his body were stripped for action. The slacks stressed the long lines of his legs, the light firm posture of standing without effort or being ready to swing forward at an instant's notice; the short sleeves stressed the gaunt strength of his arms; the open shirt bared the tight skin of his chest.
>
> (243)

Not only is the costume depicted, but also the way it should fit him (274). The same is true for Dagny.

> She wore the tight gray skirt of an office suit and a blouse of transparent white cloth tailored like a man's shirt; the blouse flared out above her waistline, stressing the trim flatness of her hips; against the glow of a lamp behind her, she could see the slender silhouette of her body with the flaring circle of the blouse.
>
> (274)

These descriptions would make good instructions for the costume designer and wardrobe mistress.

When Lillian pays a surprise visit to Hank's bedroom, her garment is described in detail:

> She wore an Empire garment of pale chartreuse, its pleated skirt streaming gracefully from its high waistline; one could not tell at first glance whether it was an evening gown or a negligee; it was a negligee. She paused in the doorway, the lines of her body flowing into an attractive silhouette against the light.
>
> (304)

Though Hank has come into the room "undressing for bed," and putting on his pajamas, we do not learn anything about what he looks like or the color or style of his pajamas at that point. Later we find out that "the tall, straight, taut lines of his body [were] emphasized by the single color of the dark blue pajamas" (305).

Another aspect of her film training that may have influenced how Rand saw costuming, is the way dress would have been seen in a classical Hollywood movie because of the three-point lighting system. In this system a key light, fill light and then a backlight were used to illuminate and slowly reveal certain aspects of the star's costume and body. Thus the star is lit from three directions, creating a three dimensional sense of the body beneath the costume as is often the case in Rand's descriptions, whether they are of Dagny's "gray evening gown that seemed indecent, because it looked austerely modest, so modest that it vanished from one's awareness and left one too aware of the slender body it pretended to cover" (396) or the outline of Hank's legs in his gray slacks.

While Rand's narrative clearly relishes the beautiful dress of many of her characters, it is also mindful of how costume establishes character and how juxtaposition can serve for cinematic emphasis. In the text, Rand describes the "evening gown of bright green chiffon with a low neckline, a belt of yellow roses and a rhinestone buckle" (390) that Cherryl Brooks wears to a reception given by Mrs. Cornelius Pope. From the narrative, one can envision how the rest of the women at the party would be costumed in sleek satin gowns of black or navy or ivory. Costume establishes both literally and figuratively that Cherryl does not fit in.

The tenuous lines of influence from film to text even stretch to what traits Rand found appealing. Writing of Pola Negri, one of her favorite silent screen stars, when she was still Alisa Rosenbaum of Petrograd, Ayn Rand uses the language she would use over three decades later to describe some of her fiction heroes. Rand writes of Negri's "mysterious contemptuous smile" (1999, 31). The appeal of such a look is not restricted to her female characters. In her description of Francisco d'Anconia, Rand uses remarkably similar language. In one scene, Francisco gives Dagny a "glance of unmoving mockery" (104). Rand, trying to convey the allure of Negri, explains: "Her type is the proud woman-conqueror, often a tragic one, but powerful even in her suffering" (1999, 32). Francisco, also in the mode of conqueror, smiles down at Dagny, "confidently, derisively" (112). Here, Rand is translating what was appealing to her on film to the pages of her novel. Hank looks at Dagny with "the faint suggestion of a contemptuous smile in his face" (267). Dagny also gets her chance to be, if not contemptuous, at least mocking. When Hank throws her down to her knees, twists her body against his legs and then bends down to kiss her, Dagny laughs soundlessly, "her laughter mocking" (268). Furthermore, the description reads that "her mouth, distorted by pain, was the shape of a mocking smile" (269).

Music to accompany plot is a mainstay of Hollywood. It began with the silent film and continues to be of such importance that there are music categories in the Academy Awards for Film Score and Song. So, it might be argued that Rand's use of a musical theme to undergird and punctuate her plot is definitely cinema inspired. Though the novel reader cannot hear it, the notes of Richard Halley's concerto run through ***Atlas Shrugged*** like movie background music. The narration calls for the chords of Richard Halley's Fifth Concerto to be heard at the beginning of the story and at the end, and it appears at intervals in the plot, always connected to one of the heroes. Just as in *Jaws,* the audience always knew when the shark was coming by the sound of that theme music, so in ***Atlas Shrugged*** the Halley Concerto is sound foreshadowing, a piece of the puzzle that Dagny seeks to solve. Heroic movie themes often become popular and present instant association with the film. An example that comes to mind is the romantic Tara theme from *Gone With the Wind* or the heroic theme of the *Star Wars* trilogy. The association of character to a musical theme is made explicit in a scene between Dagny and Francisco. She sees him for the first time after a long separation. The text reads: "Unaccountably, by an association of feeling that astonished her, she remembered what had conveyed to her recently the same sense of consummate joy as his" (121). The allusion is to hearing the Halley Concerto. Association of character or event to theme music is a standard Hollywood convention and Rand employs it in the development of her very visual, but also aural text. In the final sprint of the John Galt line toward Wyatt Junction, Dagny is overwhelmed by the speed and emotion of the moment.

> They were flying down . . . she felt as if the train were plunging downward head first. . . . She heard the rising, accelerating sound of the wheels—and some theme of music, heard to the rhythm of wheels, kept tugging at her mind growing louder—it burst suddenly within the cab, but she knew that it was only in her mind: the Fifth Concerto by Richard Halley.
>
> (247)

Rand's cinematic eye is not always in focus. There are certain parts of this novel that are decidedly calibrated to be read, not seen. The most obvious is John Galt's 60 some odd page speech. Even audiences of the 16th century who were accustomed to sitting for long, sometime five hour plays, peppered with numerous monologues, would be hard put to remain attentive for the time required. The most famous monologue in Theater History, Hamlet's "To Be Or Not To Be," is only 35 poetic lines long, taking about 2 minutes to deliver dramatically. Read at an appropriate pace for comprehension John Galt's speech would take about three hours and thirty minutes.

Still, not all of the key philosophical monologues are quite so visually static and cinematically problematic. Some, in fact, are quite dramatic and Rand's narrative rather suggestive of how the scene would be shot and edited. One does not need much visual imagination to create the scene where Francisco delivers his "Money is the root of all good" speech at Jim Taggart and Cherryl Brooks" wedding. With a curtain-raising line, the scene begins with James Taggart mouthing his hypocritical bromide: "Money is the root of all evil." The rest of this scene is presented as if Rand were a choreographer, or as they say in theatre, as if she had "blocked" the scene. To emphasize his smallness and pettiness the point-of-view or camera angle is from above, a crane shot. "He stood under the lights . . ." (392). He is in a circle of reporters. Then the camera pans to the opposite end of the ballroom, which is peopled by Orren Boyle, Bertram Scudder, and their ilk. A kind of choreographed dance of the moochers ensues as Boyle and Scudder move about categorizing the guests into the "So!" or "Well, well!" group. The macabre dance aspect, and the perspective of the overhead cam are emphasized by the language that describes Jim with a "tail of figures" that "kept trailing and shifting behind him" (393). Paul Larkin is blocked as "describing circles around Taggart" (394). The scene builds dramatically with mini-conflicts, first Cherryl's confrontation with Dagny, then Dagny's war of words with Lillian Rearden. Lillian and Jim's encounter serves to foreshadow their later affair. A soft focus or blur shot is called for as Hank walks among Lillian's friends;

Rand's text reads: "He listened like a foreigner who recognized some of the words, but could not connect them to sentences" (397). He is in focus; they are not. Eventually, Francisco's entrance is presented in a manner that is quintessential camera drama—we hear him before we see him. And, rather than being on him, the camera eye is on Jim Taggart as Francisco finishes his sentence about replacing the aristocracy of money with "an aristocracy of pull." Rand's text then blocks the scene to underline Francisco's entrance: "They whirled around and there is Francisco." Because his "money is the root of all good" speech is given in a ballroom full of people, it does not need to be static. The camera can cut to the shocked faces of most of the guests, the frightened response of some and, on occasion, Hank's dawning comprehension or Dagny's approval. Shooting Ragnar Danneskjold's anti-Robin Hood speech to Hank Rearden is also replete with cinematic possibilities.

Why then, if Rand's life was so affected by and connected to the movies, has her Magnum Opus, ***Atlas Shrugged,*** never made it to the screen? It certainly isn't for lack of trying. In the decade before her death, Rand worked with Sterling Silliphant on a script for a ten-hour television mini-series. Obviously, with the length and complexity of the work, a mini-series would be a suitable format. Silliphant explained that one of the problems was that Rand would not allow any of the dialogue to be changed and that some of that "dialogue was dated."[8] I have noted in my study of ***Atlas Shrugged*** that some of her lines read like B Hollywood gangster movies, particularly the "The game is up" and the "Brother, you asked for it" lines.[9] Other commentators have called the Galt rescue scene melodramatic and hokey Hollywood. The script, though finished, was never made. Every so often, the rumor mills buzz with word of a forthcoming production. There is an Unofficial ***Atlas Shrugged*** Movie homepage.

But, my purpose is not to engage in the seemingly endless speculation about whether the film will or will not be made or who should be cast if it is made, problematic since the stars Rand may have visualized in the major roles have all become elderly. My thesis is that irrespective of production issues, because of her base in film writing and long history with the movies, Rand writes her novels with a "cinematic eye." Hers is a cinematic mode of narration.

Notes

1. Laura Mulvey. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader.* Edited by Sue Thornham. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1999, 58-69. This foundational essay was first printed in *Screen* 16:3, 1975, 6-18.
2. Chris Sciabarra, who was kind enough to read this in draft and make suggestions for its improvement, pointed out that Howard Roark is naked in the first scene of *The Fountainhead.* True, but Rand's screenplay did not include that scene. The movie begins with Roark being expelled.
3. See Silverman's article for a fuller explanation of the relationship between suture in writing and shot/reverse shot formation in film.
4. Nathaniel Branden. Was Ayn Rand a Feminist? *Feminist Interpretations of Ayn Rand.* Edited by Mimi Reisel Gladstein and Chris Matthew Sciabarra, University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1999, 224.
5. In conversation, 8 January 2005.
6. Erika Holzer informs us that she and Rand had some "lighthearted casting conversations" in the mid 1960s. At that time Robert Redford (40 years younger) was Rand's choice. See "Passing the Torch."
7. In her *Hollywood: American City of Movies* Rand notes that costume designers are more famous than other kinds of designers in Hollywood. She mentions Erté, whose art deco designs earned him fame, and Howard Greer. Adrian, also an award-winning costumer, and his wife became good friends with Rand when she lived in Hollywood.
8. Silliphant is quoted in Barbara Branden's *The Passion of Ayn Rand,* 390.
9. *Atlas Shrugged: Manifesto of the Mind,* 43.

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Jeff Riggenbach (essay date 2007)

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[*In the following essay, Riggenbach places Rand's* Atlas Shrugged *within the science fiction genre, noting the features of the novel that conform to the science fiction formula and stating that an important "sub theme" in the work is the idea that science can "fulfill" its role "only in a society in which human beings are left free to conduct their business as they see fit."*]

It has been observed by more than a few commentators—Nat Hentoff, Grover Sales, Ken Burns, others—that "jazz is America's classical music." Similarly, it might well be argued that works of so-called "genre fiction"—detective stories, westerns, science fiction—are the true American literature. For, while the work American critics have been willing to regard as "serious fiction" has long imitated British and other European models, the genres of "popular fiction" just named were either invented here or brought to their highest level of development here.[1]

Ayn Rand was always a great admirer of American popular culture. Though she never became a jazz fan,[2] she was a lifelong fan of American movies and American popular fiction. As a teenager in Petrograd (the former St. Petersburg, which was to become Leningrad before she finally made good her escape), she was enchanted by films from America; they fueled her passionate desire to become a resident of that seemingly magical place. Once she got here, in 1926, she made a beeline for Hollywood and sought employment within the motion picture industry. As she worked on her English in the years before she began publishing, she became a devotee of American detective fiction: in later years her favorite novelist was Mickey Spillane. She loved almost everything American—American architecture, American political ideas, the list seemed endless. She wanted to be an American writer. (Unlike her fellow fugitive from St. Petersburg, Vladimir Nabokov—who had written and spoken English since childhood—she didn't go on writing in Russian for years after leaving Russia; she immediately learned English and used it professionally from the beginning of her career.) But there was always a special place in Ayn Rand's affections for American popular culture.

And when she began publishing, a decade after her arrival as a wide-eyed girl of twenty-one, it was immediately evident how deep those affections ran. Her first professional success, her play ***The Night of January 16th,*** which enjoyed a respectable run on Broadway during 1935, is a murder mystery. Her first novel, ***We the Living,*** is strikingly similar to Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind,* published at almost exactly the same time (in May of 1936 to ***We the Living***'s March), a book which Leslie Fiedler calls "a chief glory" of American popular fiction (212).[3] Her second novel, ***Anthem*** (1938), is a work of science fiction. And so, of course, is her magnum opus, ***Atlas Shrugged.***

Though these last two statements are still not universally accepted in the world of Objectivism and its students and adherents, in the world of science fiction they are regarded as obvious—and utterly non-controversial. Open the latest edition of Neil Barron's *Anatomy of Wonder: Science Fiction,* for thirty years the standard bibliography in the field; you'll find both ***Anthem*** and ***Atlas Shrugged*** listed, each with a descriptive paragraph. Open the latest edition of Clute and Nicholls' *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction,* and you'll read of Ayn Rand that

> [h]er first and better sf novel, ***Anthem*** [. . .] is a dystopia set after a devastating war. Individualism has been eliminated, along with the concept of the person, but the protagonist discovers his identity while escaping with a beautiful woman to the forest, where he christens himself Prometheus. ***The Fountainhead*** (1943) is a mainstream novel advancing AR's vision of things. In ***Atlas Shrugged*** (1957), which is sf, John Galt (AR's mouthpiece) and his Objectivist colleagues abandon an increasingly socialistic USA and retreat to the mountains as civilization crumbles, prepared to return only when they will be able to rebuild along the lines of Objectivist philosophy.
>
> (990)

To be sure, this is not a particularly accurate account of ***Atlas Shrugged*** (it treats the novel as a mere tract devoid of artistic interest or importance, which it most emphatically is not); nor is it a particularly charitable one. It is clear that Messrs. Clute and Nicholls would really rather not have a writer like Ayn Rand in their reference work at all, and that they regard her writings as largely worthless and contemptible. But they feel they must include her, since two of her novels, both quite widely known and quite widely read, are science fiction.

In light of this point, it is worth noting that the short, rather snippy summary of ***Atlas Shrugged*** which Clute and Nicholls do grudgingly provide doesn't even make clear why Rand's novel should be regarded as a work of science fiction. That issue, they seem to feel, is too obvious to require any comment. Nonetheless, let us devote a few paragraphs to "unpacking," as Rand might say, the concept of "science fiction."

On 8 February 1957, only a few months before ***Atlas Shrugged*** was published, Robert A. Heinlein, a novelist with whom Ayn Rand has often been both compared and contrasted and with whom she has long shared a substantial readership, delivered a lecture at the University of Chicago under the title "Science Fiction: Its Nature, Faults and Virtues." Heinlein began by noting that

> [t]he field now known as science fiction had no agreed name until about twenty-five years ago [i.e., ca. 1932]. The field has existed throughout the history of literature, but it used to be called by several names: speculative romance, pseudo-scientific romance (a term that sets a science fiction writer's teeth on edge), utopian literature, fantasy—or, more frequently, given no name, simply lumped in with all other fiction.
>
> (14-15)

Science fiction, Heinlein proposed, is

> Fiction [. . .] in which the author shows awareness of the nature and importance of the human activity known as the scientific method, shows equal awareness of the great body of human knowledge already collected through that activity, and takes into account in his stories the effects and possible future effects on human beings of scientific method and scientific fact.
>
> (16)

The author of ***Atlas Shrugged*** certainly shows "awareness of the nature and importance of the human activity known as the scientific method." Indeed, science, and its role in human life, is one of the more important sub themes of Rand's big novel. Rand (1969) wrote that "the theme of ***Atlas Shrugged*** is: 'The role of the mind in man's existence'" (58). But, of course, like any complex work of art, the novel also features a number of sub-themes, each of which contributes to the ultimate realization of the overarching theme Rand rightly identifies as lying at ***Atlas Shrugged***'s core.[4] One of these sub-themes—the one that accounts, I think, for the lion's share of the novel's enduring popular success—is the role of the State in human life. Another is the psychology of achievement. Still another is the nature of science and its proper role in human affairs.

It may be helpful, in understanding the novel's treatment of science, to tell the story of ***Atlas Shrugged*** in a somewhat different order from the one Rand employs. Once upon a time, then, three young men—teenagers, really, since they were all of sixteen years old at the time (786)—enrolled at the Patrick Henry University of Cleveland, Ohio, at that time perhaps the preeminent American institution of higher learning. The three—John Galt, Francisco d'Anconia, and Ragnar Danneskjöld—pursued a double major in physics and philosophy (787), studying under the legendary philosopher Hugh Akston, who later retired and disappeared, and the brilliant physicist Robert Stadler, who later left the university to head the new State Science Institute. Upon graduation, the three went their separate ways: d'Anconia to work in his family's multi-billion-dollar international business, Danneskjöld to graduate school to prepare for a career as an academic philosopher, Galt to a career as an inventor, beginning with a post in the research laboratory of a commercial business enterprise, the Twentieth Century Motor Company of Starnesville, Wisconsin (789, 661).

While at the Twentieth Century Motor Company, Galt invents a new type of motor. As his former teacher, Dr. Robert Stadler, puts it years later, "[h]e wanted a motor, and he quietly performed a major revolution in the science of energy, just as a means to an end, and he didn't bother to publish his findings, but went right on making his motor" (356). What Stadler sees as a "major revolution in the science of energy," Dagny Taggart, the Vice President in Charge of Operation of Taggart Transcontinental, the nation's largest railroad, sees as "the greatest revolution in power motors since the internal-combustion engine—greater than that!" Looking, years later, at the wreckage of a no-longer-operational model of Galt's breakthrough, "a motor that would draw static electricity from the atmosphere, convert it and create its own power as it went along," she muses to her friend and associate, steel magnate Hank Rearden,

> Who'll want to look at a Diesel? Who'll want to worry about oil, coal or refueling stations? Do you see what I see? A brand-new locomotive half the size of a single Diesel unit, and with ten times the power. A self-generator, working on a few drops of fuel, with no limits to its energy. The cleanest, swiftest, cheapest means of motion ever devised. Do you see what this will do to our transportation systems and to the country—in about one year?
>
> (289)

All this presupposes, of course, that the motor can be repaired—which presupposes in turn that someone can reconstruct Galt's theoretical breakthrough, his new concept of energy, which is sketched only in part in a fragmentary manuscript found by Dagny and Rearden on the same scrap heap from which they rescued the motor itself.

Galt's motor is one of three inventions that propel the action of ***Atlas Shrugged.*** The second is Rearden Metal, invented by Hank Rearden, "an alloy that will render steel and aluminum obsolete" (Snider). Defending her decision to order rails of Rearden Metal for their railroad's decaying Rio Norte Line, Dagny Taggart tells her brother James, "it's tougher than steel, cheaper than steel and will outlast any hunk of metal in existence" (21). Rearden himself, looking back on his long struggle to perfect the new alloy, recalls that his goal was "a metal alloy that would do more than steel had ever done, a metal that would be to steel what steel had been

to iron" (30). In conversation with Dagny Taggart, he envisions Rearden Metal rail cars, "which will be half the weight of steel and twice as safe," being pulled over Rearden Metal track by Diesel engines made of Rearden Metal. Those trains, he tells her, will be able to run safely at two hundred and fifty miles per hour. Still, she'll "have to look out for the air lines. We're working on a plane of Rearden Metal. It will weigh practically nothing and lift anything. You'll see the day of long-haul, heavy-freight air traffic." Nor do trains and planes exhaust Rearden's examples of the ways in which his metal can transform society. "Have you thought," he asks Dagny,

> of what it will do for chicken wire? Just plain chicken-wire fences, made of Rearden Metal, that will cost a few pennies a mile and last two hundred years. And kitchenware that will be bought at the dime store and passed on from generation to generation. And ocean liners that one won't be able to dent with a torpedo.

And, he wonders, "Did I tell you that I'm having tests made of communications wire of Rearden Metal?" (86-7).

The third of the three major inventions that propel the plot of ***Atlas Shrugged*** is the xylophone, which Dr. Floyd Ferris of the State Science Institute describes as "a scientific achievement of such tremendous importance, such staggering scope, such epoch-making possibilities that up to this moment it has been known only to a very few" (821). The xylophone is a weapon, based on the discovery that "there are certain frequencies of sound vibration which no structure, organic or inorganic, can withstand" (824). Dr. Robert Stadler observes an exhibition of the xylophone's power; before an audience of invited dignitaries, it reduces a farmhouse (with equipment and water tower) and a herd of goats to an inchoate pile of fur and rubble. Dr. Stadler

> turned away and saw that Dr. Ferris was still watching him. Dr. Stadler leaned back a little, his face austere and scornful, the face of the nation's greatest scientist, and asked, "Who invented that ghastly thing?"
>
> "You did."
>
> Dr. Stadler looked at him, not moving.
>
> "It is merely a practical appliance," said Dr. Ferris pleasantly, "based upon your theoretical discoveries. It was derived from your invaluable research into the nature of cosmic rays and of the spatial transmission of energy."

And finding the money necessary to turn Dr. Stadler's research into a monstrous weapon had been almost effortlessly easy, as it turned out. As Dr. Ferris tells Dr. Stadler,

> the State Science Institute had no trouble in obtaining funds for the Project. You have not heard of the Institute having any financial difficulties in the past two years, have you? And it used to be such a problem—getting them to vote the funds necessary for the advancement of science. They always demanded gadgets for their cash, as you used to say. Well, here was a gadget which some people in power could fully appreciate. They got the others to vote for it. It wasn't difficult. In fact a great many of those others felt safe in voting money for a project that was secret—they felt certain it was important, since they were not considered important enough to be let in on it. There were, of course, a few skeptics and doubters. But they gave in when they were reminded that the head of the State Science Institute was Dr. Robert Stadler—whose judgment and integrity they could not doubt.
>
> (825-6)

The potential impact of Galt's and Rearden's inventions is severely dampened or even cut off by government interference and "regulation." Galt's motor is, as it were, withdrawn from the market before it is ever put into practical use, a casualty of potential governmental interference.[5] Rearden's metal helps briefly to revitalize an important branch line of the Taggart Transcontinental system, and with it the entire region made up of Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona; then, under the market-distorting provisions of the government's latest directives, Rearden's production is diverted from rail, bridges, ocean liners, and planes to golf clubs, "coffee pots, garden tools, and bathroom faucets" (361). Its potential to transform the economy, which had aroused such enthusiasm in Rearden and Dagny, is virtually lost. Similarly, another private-sector inventor, Ellis Wyatt, who, early in the novel, "had discovered some way to revive exhausted oil wells," announces a couple of hundred pages later a "process I've developed" to "get oil from shale—the cheapest oil ever to splash in their faces, and an unlimited supply of it, an untapped supply that will make the biggest oil pool look like a mud puddle" (10, 249). Wyatt's technological breakthroughs help fuel the brief boom in Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona that is destroyed, along with Wyatt's business enterprise, by the directives of the Bureau of Economic Planning and National Resources.

Dr. Robert Stadler's unwitting invention, the xylophone, by contrast, has the sort of major, direct impact on society that Galt, Rearden, and Wyatt had only hoped to see from their own inventions. It not only places the State Science Institute in an enviable position with regard to funding, as Dr. Ferris reported to Dr. Stadler at the xylophone's unveiling; it also manages, in the novel's closing pages, to wipe out the Taggart Bridge over the Mississippi River, thereby severing the country and plunging it further into social and economic chaos. In the sort of world the United States has become in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** the inventions unleashed by market forces will tend to have minimal impact, while those subsidized by government and capable only of destruction will do far better.

In fact, the State Science Institute that is strengthened and empowered by Dr. Stadler's unwitting but fearsome invention is inevitably responsible for undermining science and reducing its genuine contributions to human happiness. Dr. Stadler, who had once told a student, "Free scientific inquiry? The first adjective is redundant," helps to sell the proposed institute to a wary American public by urging his countrymen to "[s]et science free of the rule of the dollar" (185). Yet it is in pursuit of just such dollars that the institute develops the xylophone. And it is in pursuit of the "popularity" that will make such dollars easier to obtain that the institute, much to Dr. Stadler's rage and embarrassment, publishes a trashy popular book by Dr. Floyd Ferris called *Why Do You Think You Think?*—a book that, Dr. Ferris candidly admits to Dr. Stadler, does provide logical support for the proposition that "science is a futile fraud which ought to be abolished" (346-7).

Rand's overall message with regard to science seems clear: the role of science in human life and human society is to provide the knowledge on the basis of which technological advancement and related improvements in the quality of human life can be realized. But science can fulfill this role only in a society in which human beings are left free to conduct their business as they see fit. Thus, for Rand, how science affects humans will depend in large measure on political, not scientific, developments. In his famous radio speech, John Galt refers to

> those mystics of science who profess a devotion to some sort of "pure knowledge"—the purity consisting of their claim that such knowledge has no practical purpose on this earth—who reserve their logic for inanimate matter, but believe that the subject of dealing with men requires and deserves no rationality, who scorn money and sell their souls in exchange for a laboratory supplied by loot. And since there is no such thing as "non-practical knowledge" or any sort of "disinterested" action, since they scorn the use of their science for the purpose and profit of life, they deliver their science to the service of death, to the only practical purpose it can ever have for looters: to inventing weapons of coercion and destruction.
>
> (1066)

One further point remains to be made. In most bookstores, science fiction is displayed in the same section with another literary genre, assumed by most people to be a close relation of science fiction—namely, fantasy. And such thinking is far from confined to bookstore personnel. The Libertarian Futurist Society, which presents the annual Prometheus Award for the best science fiction novel with a libertarian theme, also presents one or more Hall of Fame Awards for classic libertarian science fiction and fantasy each year—lumping the two genres together as though they were pretty much the same thing. (***Atlas Shrugged*** won the society's Hall of Fame Award in 1983; ***Anthem*** was the winner in 1987.) Rand herself spoke of science fiction in her posthumously published ***Art of Fiction*** as one of the "forms of literature that can be classified as fantasy." She distinguished it from other kinds of fantasy by noting that "science fiction [. . .] projects future inventions" (169).

This is in sharp contrast to the approach Robert A. Heinlein took to the subject in "Science Fiction: Its Nature, Faults and Virtues." For Heinlein, all events in all fiction are imaginary; fantasy is fiction in which at least some of the events depicted are both "imaginary-and-not-possible"; realistic fiction is fiction in which all the events depicted are "imaginary-but-possible [. . .] i.e., imaginary but could be real so far as we know the real universe." As far as Heinlein is concerned, "[s]cience fiction is in the latter class. It is not fantasy."

Heinlein acknowledges that "there is never full agreement as to the established facts nor as to what constitutes the real world," but he proposes that, for literary purposes, it would be sufficient to think of "the factual universe of our experience" in terms of how "one would expect such words to be used by educated and enlightened members of western culture" at the time we are living. He also notes that "[t]he science fiction author is not limited by currently accepted theory nor by popular opinion; he need only respect established fact" (19).

This is precisely how Ayn Rand proceeds in ***Atlas Shrugged.*** She freely disregards the fact that currently accepted theory regards such a motor as John Galt built or such processes as Ellis Wyatt perfected as impossible. But she is scrupulous in depicting nothing in her big novel that contradicts established fact. As Rand always insisted, she was a realist—to be more exact, a **"Romantic Realist"** (***Manifesto*** [***The Romantic Manifesto***], 168).

> "Romantic"—Nathaniel Branden explained, "because her work is concerned with values, with the essential, the abstract, the universal in human life, and with the projection of man as a heroic being. Realist—because the values she selects pertain to this earth and to man's actual nature, and because the issues with which she deals are the crucial and fundamental ones of our age."
>
> (88)

This is correct, as far as it goes. Rand was a romantic realist. But she was also a science fiction writer. If that seems like a contradiction to you, remember what Francisco told Dagny when she came to him for money to finance the John Galt Line: "Contradictions do not exist. Whenever you think that you are facing a contradiction, check your premises. You will find that one of them is wrong" (199).

Notes

1. On jazz as America's classical music, see Nat Hentoff, *Jazz Is* (New York: Random House, 1976) and Grover Sales, *Jazz: America's Classical Mu-*

sic (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1984). Ken Burns's *Jazz* debuted on PBS in January 2001 and is now widely available for purchase as a set of ten DVDs. For a first stab at an argument that genre fiction is the true American literature see Jeff Riggenbach, "The National Letters," in *The Libertarian Review* (March 1980): 14-29. The western is, of course, uniquely and indisputably American. And it is generally acknowledged by historians of the mystery genre that it was Edgar Allan Poe who invented the detective story. A solid case may also be made for the claim that Poe invented science fiction—see Thomas M. Disch, *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of: How Science Fiction Conquered the World* (New York: Free Press, 1998)—though a perhaps equally solid case has been made for the claim that Mary Shelley actually did the deed with the publication in 1818 of her novel *Frankenstein*—see Brian Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction* (New York: Doubleday, 1973). In any case, it is evident that the main action in both these genres has always been on this side of the Atlantic and that, however brilliant some of their individual contributions to both detective fiction and science fiction have been, the British have been followers, not leaders, in the process of their development.

2. Rand wrote, in her foreword to the revised 1959 edition of *We the Living* (first published in 1936), that "*We the Living* is as near to an autobiography as I will ever write. [. . .] The specific events of Kira's life were not mine; her ideas, her convictions, her values were and are" (xviii-xix). Early in the novel, Kira and Leo, her lover, make their first, abortive try at escaping the newly minted and already disastrously failing Soviet Union. To keep up each other's spirits as they prepare to stow away aboard an outbound ship, they remind each other of what they will find if only they have the courage to stay the course and discover a way over to the other side.

> Leo whispered: "Over there . . . there are automobiles . . . and boulevards . . . and lights . . .".
>
> An old man stood in a doorway, snow gathering in the brim of his frayed hat, his head hanging down on his breast, asleep over a tray of homemade cookies.
>
> Kira whispered: ". . . lipstick and silk stockings . . ."
>
> A stray dog sniffed at a barrel of refuse under the dark window of a co-operative. Leo whispered: ". . . champagne . . . radios . . . jazz bands."
>
> (100)

Yet, according to Barbara Branden, it would be a mistake to infer from this passage that Rand herself was fond of jazz. "No, not especially," Branden told an interviewer in 1992, when asked, "Did Ayn Rand like jazz?" "On the other hand," Branden continued, "jazz had a kind of symbolic significance for Rand, and it was this—the 'larger meaning' of jazz—that led her to use it as she did in *We the Living*". According to Branden, "Rand said once [. . .] that what she would love more than anything is not ever to have to think about politics, because it wouldn't be necessary. She loved what she saw as the frivolous in America, that this was a country where you didn't have to be concerned whether you were going to starve to death before tomorrow, or freeze to death, or to be put in prison, or sent to Siberia. You could be concerned with things like lipstick and silk stockings. And jazz. So [. . .] even if she didn't care for jazz specifically, [it] was symbolic to her of everything that Russia didn't have and that America did." (See http://www.barbarabranden.com/interview4.html.) If anything, Branden may have understated the case when she said that Rand didn't "especially" like jazz. In May 1936, only a few weeks after the first publication of *We the Living,* Rand wrote to the radio announcer "Ev Suffens" (air name of Raymond Nelson), who had solicited input from his listeners as to the future of his late night program *Midnight Jamboree,* that "[a]s to the music, my vote is: more classics, particularly light concert classics such as you have been playing lately. Personally, I would say: all classics, but I don't mind suffering through a jazz number once in a while if it's necessary and if your audience demands it" (*Letters* 30).

3. For an extended discussion of the similarities between *We the Living* and *Gone with the Wind,* as well as of the relation of Rand's writing to so-called "popular fiction," see Jeff Riggenbach, "Ayn Rand's Influence on American Popular Fiction," *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 6 (2004): 91-144.

4. One is reminded of James Whistler's response when an art critic faulted his painting *Symphony in White No. III* on the grounds that "it is not precisely a symphony in white. One lady has a yellowish dress and brown hair and a bit of blue ribbon, the other has a red fan, and there are flowers and green leaves. There is a girl in white on a white sofa, but even this girl has reddish hair; and of course there is the flesh colour of the complexions." "*Bon Dieu!,*" Whistler replied, "did this wise person expect white hair and chalked faces? And does he then, in his astounding consequence, believe that a symphony in F contains no other note, but shall be a continued repetition of F, F, F?" (44-45).

5. More exactly, Galt withdrew the motor because the company for whom he designed and built it had adopted a new operating philosophy: "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" (661).

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Tara Smith (essay date 2009)

SOURCE: Smith, Tara. "No Tributes to Caesar: Good or Evil in *Atlas Shrugged.*" In *Essays on Ayn Rand's* Atlas Shrugged, edited by Robert Mayhew, pp. 275-98. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2009.

[*In the following essay, Smith outlines Rand's concept of value and the need for every individual to make "good or evil" choices in life as developed in her novel* Atlas Shrugged, *noting especially how the protagonists' "increased knowledge" of their alternative choices "alters their course of action" and guides the structure of Rand's narrative.*]

Atlas Shrugged helps us to understand the life-and-death consequences of rationality and irrationality. Correlatively, it illustrates the inescapability of value choices. By demonstrating how the law of excluded middle plays out in the realm of human action, Ayn Rand vividly dramatizes how every choice that a person makes is good or evil insofar as it carries repercussions on his existence. Only with a firm grasp of this fact can we fully understand the action of the novel. This fundamental "either-or" also explains the absolutist character of Rand's moral philosophy.

To help us digest the significance of Rand's insight, this paper will examine the choice between good and evil. In particular, it will focus on the mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive nature of these alternatives to make plain their life-or-death consequences. It will proceed in four stages. First, to indicate morality's roots in the issue of life or death, I will outline Rand's view of the basic nature of value. Second, we will trace pivotal elements in the protagonists' steadily increasing understanding of the character of their alternatives over the course of the story. Next, we will observe how this increased knowledge alters their course of action. Finally and more briefly, we will indicate how the "either-or," mutually exclusive character of this alternative dictates the absolutist character of Rand's moral code. All of this, I believe, will help the reader to understand the theme of ***Atlas Shrugged***—the role of the mind in human existence—more richly.[1]

The Nature and Foundations of Value

To understand the life-or-death stakes of morality's authority and the inescapability of value choices, we must first understand Rand's view of what morality is. While this is a large subject that warrants extensive explanation in its own right, a basic sketch must suffice here.[2]

In ***Atlas*** [***Atlas Shrugged***], Rand illustrates how morality and rationality go hand in hand. "Man's reason *is* his moral faculty," Galt observes, and "thinking is man's only basic virtue" (1017, emphasis in original). The rational is the moral. Rand was led to this conclusion by investigating the roots of morality.[3]

"Morality is a code of values to guide man's choices and actions—the choices and actions that determine the purpose and the course of his life."[4] But, Rand asks, why should a person be moral? On what grounds does it make sense to consider certain things good or valuable? What she finds, in answer, is that it is only in relation to living organisms that anything can be good or bad. For inanimate objects, no values exist. Nothing can be good or bad for a bench or a clock or a stone insofar as these entities have nothing to gain or to lose as a result of anything's effects on them. "Gains" and "losses" are possible only in relation to some end. Indeed, this is precisely how we measure gains and losses: by things' impact on the achievement (or maintenance) of a goal. As Rand explains,

> "Value" is that which one acts to gain and/or keep. The concept "value" is not a primary; it presupposes an answer to the question: of value to *whom* and for *what*? It presupposes an entity capable of acting to achieve a goal in the face of an alternative. Where no alternative exists, no goals and no values are possible.[5]

Values arise, in other words, only in relation to entities that pursue an end whose achievement stands to be positively or negatively affected by those entities' actions.

Since life literally is a process of self-generating and self-sustaining action, living beings do have such an end: their continued existence.[6] To be a living entity is to be engaged in the process of self-*sustaining* action. (To the extent that an entity is not engaged in such action, it is not functioning as a living organism.) In relation to that end (its existence), various things can be beneficial or harmful. This is not to imply that all human beings necessarily embrace that end or adopt their existence as a conscious objective. Man is free to reject his life and to suffer the consequences. The point, rather, is that ends make possible benefits. Apart from their relation to an end, the concept of "benefits" would be meaningless.

Living organisms are not simply helpless, passive recipients of external events' impact, however. Their actions affect their survival. Thus it is important to appreciate that this, more specifically, is what gives rise to the phenomenon of values. It enables us to identify certain objects of organisms' actions as objectively good for them.

All living organisms need to act in ways that sustain their existence. Accordingly, that which is conducive to the existence of an organism is good for it; that which is detrimental is bad. For a plant, absorbing sunlight or water might be a value; for a given animal, the acquisition of nuts or berries or a safe environment to hibernate. For a human being, food or money or knowledge or friendship would typically be values. Obviously, particulars vary with the species.[7] The shared basis for all values, however, is the fact that organisms' existence depends on their acting in ways that sustain their existence.

For all of human beings' similarity with other organisms, the distinctive way in which human beings confront the alternative of existence or nonexistence creates our unique need for morality. Because human beings volitionally select our actions, we must rationally evaluate our options, identifying things' probable impact on our lives in order to pursue those things that offer a positive contribution and to avoid those that threaten harm. Only the former are objective values. A person *should* seek to gain and to keep certain things, in other words—and he requires guidance from a moral code that identifies objective values—only if and because he seeks his existence. What underwrites morality's authority is causality: if a man seeks a certain end, he must respect its necessary conditions and enact the requisite means by achieving appropriate values. A rational moral code is designed to guide him in doing this. Without the desire to live, the mandate for morality dissolves; no moral "shoulds" are warranted.[8] (This explains Galt's statement that a moral "commandment" is a contradiction in terms [1018].)

What Rand identifies, then, is the fact that for human beings, "the standard of value . . .—the standard by which one judges what is good or evil—is *man's life*, or: that which is required for man's survival *qua* man."[9] And a man's own life is his proper purpose. Rand stresses that "life" refers not only to physical subsistence, but to the overall fit and healthy condition of an organism such that it is poised to prosper in the future. Insofar as human beings are mental as well as material beings and insofar as a man's psychological and physical conditions affect one another, the standard of life subsumes the condition of a man's psyche (his beliefs, values, emotional dispositions, cognitive methods, and the like).[10] What is important for our purposes is that this standard provides the basis for the identification of objective values. That is, the basis for distinguishing between those things that truly are in a person's interest and those things that are treated as such by particular individuals, but which are not, in fact. While their dimension can vary considerably, all objective values offer some positive net contribution to a person's well-being.[11] (Henceforth, my references to "values" will be restricted to values for human beings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.)

Because morality's authority is contingent on a person's embrace of his life—his desire for his continued existence—it is important to have a sound understanding of what this is. The "choice to live" does not consist of a purely intellectual preference for a clinical medical status, exerted on an isolated occasion. Rather, it is a wholehearted commitment manifested in countless actions that a person takes every day. A man chooses to live by conducting his days in a life-advancing manner, by seeking to make his life go as well as possible, by actively and continuously going after goals that enhance it. The man who truly embraces his life treats his flourishing as the overriding reason for all that he does.[12] This stance is palpable in ***Atlas***' heroes. And it is noticeably absent among the villains.

Notice that certain of the villains' ends which would normally function as values in a person's life do not, for them. Jim's money, for instance, is sterile. It does nothing life-nourishing for him. His wealth does not result from his own life-supporting action and is not used by him to achieve his objective well-being. This does

not mean that he might not enjoy having money; by pretending that it proves something about his relative merit vis-à-vis others, Jim occasionally takes a fleeting reassurance from it. But his wealth does not represent his achievement of objective values and does not actually further his life.

Similarly, Lillian's marriage is not a genuine value for her. The desire to exert a perverse sense of moral superiority over Hank and her anticipation of pleasure in catching her husband with his mistress reveal her ends as anything but healthy (525-26). Her marriage to Hank does not reflect a celebration of his objective value to her, nor of the fact that she is a value to him; rather, it reflects Lillian's futile desire to gain value through the destruction of another man's virtue. She belittles the bracelet made of Rearden Metal (which *is* a value to Dagny and to Hank) and sleeps with Jim only as a testament to their common wish to deface values (900).

A different kind of case to consider is Taggart Transcontinental. Dagny treats the railroad as a value through most of the book, until she finally joins the strike. Yet her viewing it as a life-serving enterprise does not make it so. Attitude does not determine the positive or negative effects that things carry for human existence. While the railroad was a great value to many, in its earlier history, its value is not intrinsic. Its ability to serve anyone's life cannot withstand the abuses imposed by the looters. As distorted by altruist demands and coercive restrictions, the sad fact that Dagny finally confronts is that her beloved railroad, and her work in directing it, are no longer a constructive contributor to her life.[13]

These are just a few examples of how characters in ***Atlas*** do or do not embrace their lives. When it comes to spelling out a code of morality to guide the man who does wish to live, Rand identifies the central principle as rationality. For this is the fundamental requirement of our existence. Human beings must deliberately utilize our powers of conceptual thought in order to create the values that satisfy our needs. "Man's mind is his basic tool of survival," Galt observes.

> To remain alive, he must act, and before he can act he must know the nature and purpose of his action. He cannot obtain his food without a knowledge of food and of the way to obtain it. He cannot dig a ditch—or build a cyclotron—without a knowledge of his aim and of the means to achieve it. To remain alive, he must think.
>
> (1012)

As Rand elaborates elsewhere,

> For an animal, the question of survival is primarily physical; for man, primarily epistemological.
>
> Man's unique reward, however, is that while animals survive by adjusting themselves to their background, man survives by adjusting his background to himself. If a drought strikes them, animals perish—man builds irrigation canals; if a flood strikes them, animals perish—man builds dams; if a carnivorous pack attacks them animals perish—man writes the Constitution of the United States. But one does not obtain food, safety or freedom—by instinct.[14]
>
> ([**"For the New Intellectual"**])

All of this should help us to understand the bond between reason and morality expressed in Galt's declaration that a man's basic moral choice "in every hour and every issue" is "thinking or non-thinking, existence or non-existence" (1018). Given that values are grounded in the alternative between existence and nonexistence, every decision that stands to further or detract from a man's existence is an issue of morality. Correspondingly, the choice between good and evil that a man confronts in any of his actions is, at root, the choice between life and death. The questions "Should I be moral or immoral?" or "Should I follow rational principle or cheat?" amount to: "Should I act to live, or to die?"

Understanding the Alternatives

Having sketched Rand's basic understanding of good and evil, we can now consider the way in which the central figures in ***Atlas*** come to appreciate this.

At the book's opening, the men on strike understand what "choosing life," as a human being, requires. Hank and Dagny do not. Suspended in a kind of limbo, Hank and Dagny do not consciously embrace the looters' code, yet their actions defer to substantial portions of it. The reason is a lack of knowledge on their parts and as the story unfolds, we witness the steady growth of their understanding. When Dagny retreats to the cabin in the woods, for instance, she misframes her conflict as whether to give up on life by quitting, as so many others have, or to labor on, on the looters' terms (611).[15] Gradually, she and Hank come to appreciate that the strikers have not given up. They, uniquely, have "chosen" their lives, on a full understanding of what the terms of human life are.

Essentially, what Hank and Dagny eventually realize is that the world is animated by two basic premises—life and death—and that the alternative between them is mutually exclusive. Their opponents do not seek life, they learn, and consequently, no values can be gained from these people. Concessions to the demands of death cannot advance life. It is these realizations that convince Hank and Dagny to withdraw their sanction of irrational standards as the only way to champion their own happiness. It is by recognizing the self-defeating character of their concessions to the looters that they finally renounce those burdens and join the strike.

The Death Premise

The evil that ***Atlas***' heroes battle is not a freestanding force in the universe; it is not an anonymous, inevitable presence. While the concept of evil has acquired all

sorts of murky and largely mystical connotations over the years, in fact, "evil" refers to those actions, ideas, objects, policies, and persons whose nature is essentially antagonistic to the conditions of human flourishing. Just as the good is that which advances human life, evil is that which works against it.[16] The single most decisive discovery that Hank and Dagny make is that their adversaries do not value their lives. They are dedicated, instead, to what Galt calls the morality of death (1025, also see 1046-47). Whether or not they recognize this in such explicit terms, death is the goal and the standard of their course.

Through much of the plot, Hank and Dagny grant the benefit of the doubt to their adversaries, even as they impose ever more onerous demands, penalize the producers' success, and seek to inflict guilt and suffering. "Surely they're after what we're after," Hank and Dagny assume; "surely they want to live." "I can carry Jim (the railroad, the family);" "I can endure these vacuous social appearances with Lillian;" "I can put up with their irrationalities." Particularly as the looters' political policies backfire and the resulting economic contraction intensifies, surely, Hank and Dagny expect, the others will recognize the error of their ways. In fact, however, what the heroes come to realize is that there *is* no error in the looters' course. Having accepted the premise of death, the destruction that their philosophy inflicts is what they're after.[17]

Notice that Hank and Dagny's charitable assumption that all people are "on the same side" is exactly what is challenged in several of their encounters with strikers. When Francisco pays a call on Rearden at his mills, Francisco tells him that he has been placing his "virtue in the service of evil" (453). Needless to say, that is hardly how Rearden views his course. Francisco explains:

> You're guilty of a great sin, Mr. Rearden, much guiltier than they tell you, but not in the way they preach. The worst guilt is to accept an undeserved guilt—and that is what you have been doing all your life. You have been paying blackmail, not for your vices, but for your virtues. You have been willing to carry the load of an unearned punishment—and to let it grow the heavier the greater the virtues you practiced. But your virtues were those which keep men alive. Your own moral code—the one you lived by, but never stated, acknowledged or defended—was the code that preserves man's existence. If you were punished for it, what was the nature of those who punished you? Yours was the code of life. What, then, is theirs?"
>
> (455)

In the valley, after Dagny explains her reason for returning to the "real" world, Akston's response names the fact that she has not yet identified. She begins the exchange:

> "If you want to know the one reason that's taking me back, I'll tell you: I cannot bring myself to abandon to destruction all the greatness of the world, all that which was mine and yours, which was made by us and is still ours by right—because I cannot believe that men can refuse to see, that they can remain blind and deaf to us forever, when the truth is ours and their lives depend on accepting it. They still love their lives—and *that* is the uncorrupted remnant of their minds. So long as men desire to live, I cannot lose my battle."
>
> "Do they?" said Hugh Akston softly. "Do they desire it? No, don't answer me now. I know that the answer was the hardest thing for any of us to grasp and to accept. Just take that question back with you, as the last premise left for you to check."
>
> (807)

Consider an earlier exchange, also, in which Dagny explains her perseverance to Francisco:

> She glanced at the city. "The life of a man of ability who might have perished in that catastrophe, but will escape the next one, which I'll prevent—a man who has an intransigent mind and an unlimited ambition, and is in love with his own life . . . the kind of man who is what we were when we started, you and I. You gave him up. I can't."
>
> He closed his eyes for an instant, and the tightening movement of his mouth was a smile, a smile substituting for a moan of understanding, amusement and pain. He asked, his voice gravely gentle, "Do you think that you can still serve him—that kind of man—by running the railroad?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "All right, Dagny. I won't try to stop you. So long as you still think that, nothing can stop you, or should. You will stop on the day when you'll discover that your work has been placed in the service, not of that man's life, but of his destruction."
>
> (635)

A little later, she continues,

> "If I can keep Taggart Transcontinental in existence, it's the only benefit I want. What do I care if they make me pay ransoms? Let them have what they want. I'll have the railroad."
>
> He smiled. "Do you think so? Do you think that their need of you is your protection? Do you think that you can give them what they want? No, you won't quit until you see, of your own sight and judgment, what it is that they really want. You know, Dagny, we were taught that some things belong to God and others to Caesar. Perhaps their God would permit it. But the man you say we're serving—he does not permit it. He permits no divided allegiance, no war between your mind and your body, no gulf between your values and your actions, no tributes to Caesar. He permits no Caesars."
>
> (636)

At one level, Francisco is denying any inherent conflict between the demands of a man's mind and of his body. These are not warring rulers between which man is

doomed to unceasing strife. (Hank, in particular, is tormented by a struggle between serving rational standards in the material realm and the irrational standards of others in regard to spiritual values. This is most painfully evidenced in his attitude toward his relationship with Dagny.[18] Obviously, he eventually learns the proper relationship.) More fundamentally, however, Francisco is observing that a man is beholden to no sovereigns other than reality. If a man wishes to exist—if he seeks to achieve his own happiness—then he must respect the demands imposed by the nature of reality. He must respect the fact that A is A—in his beliefs, in his desires, in his actions. That is the price that his life demands. Because reality is not a part-time master, however, and because its sovereignty is shared with no competing masters, the causal conditions necessary for a man's own happiness are his only God. Reality allows no deference to rivals. To the extent that a man pays tributes to any alternative sovereign, he defies the requirements of his own happiness.

The claim that ***Atlas***' evil characters function on the premise of death may initially seem overly dark, I think, because it is a difficult fact to accept, as Akston remarks to Dagny (807, cited above). To appreciate the truth of this and its significance for the plot, we need to understand more precisely what the death premise is and how it is manifested in various characters.

Essentially, acceptance of the death premise means that a person does not value his life. The alternative between A and not-A, when the A in question is life, is the alternative between life and death. To the extent that a person's actions are not animated by the ambition of advancing his life, therefore, they, and he, are anti-life.

Just as embracing one's life is not simply an attitude experienced on a single occasion, accepting the death premise is not necessarily a conscious declaration made in a single moment. People on the death premise need not explicitly resolve: "I hate life. I pledge to hinder life wherever I can." Their governing premise is manifested, rather, in the way they spend their days. More specifically, it consists of their spurning (and often actively opposing) the pursuit of objective values.

Individuals on the premise of life are fundamentally thinkers and valuers. They acknowledge that human survival depends on the exercise of reason. And they accept the correlative responsibility of using their rationality as their means of acquiring knowledge, embracing ends, and achieving values. We observe this throughout ***Atlas*** in the heroes' basic orientation. All of the admirable characters, from Dagny and Galt through Eddie Willers and Gwen Ives, repeatedly respond to problems with logical thought and practical follow-through. They take command—of their minds and of their actions.

Those on the premise of death, by contrast, are, at their least destructive, passive. They do not exercise their rational faculties. Rather than focus and think in order to achieve any ends, they characteristically "summon the fog" (as Rand puts it in a description of Jim Taggart, 868). They evade, they shirk, they count on others to fulfill their needs and satisfy their desires. Jim, for instance, expects Dagny to make the railroad run and Cherryl—or *someone*—to shower unearned love on him (and, he hopes, in defiance of causality, to gain worth thereby). The tunnel catastrophe is the logical combustion of numerous individuals' cumulative evasions.[19]

James Taggart

Late in the story, when a beggar is blasé about receiving Jim's hundred-dollar offering, Jim is disturbed by dimly recognizing that the beggar's indifference to values mirrors his own (864). Whatever Jim's social position or job title or money might be, that breathing driftwood embodies Jim's basic character. We also come to know far more vicious depths of Jim's devotion to the death premise, however. He belligerently evinces positive hatred of objective values as such and of those who achieve them.[20] From childhood, Jim is jealous, resentful, and disparaging of Francisco and Dagny. He rides on their coattails while ridiculing their accomplishments as not truly impressive or as only so much good luck. His attitude toward men of ability is naked in the animus he spews toward Hank, in a conversation with Lillian: "'I'd like to see him beaten,' he said. 'I'd like to hear him scream with pain, just once'" (899).

After perfunctory sex with Betty Pope (emblematic of the utter void of values in both their lives), their gloomy next morning of lethargic, irritable sniping and indignation at life in general brightens when he turns his attention to "putting the skids" under his sister at a board meeting later that day (71).[21] Jim and Betty bond over their resentment of Dagny's success and Jim's plans to "put her in her place" (71). Only the prospect of a producer's downfall rekindles some semblance of desire in this pair. "Maybe I *will* take you out tonight," Jim chirps to Betty, after contemplating his trap for Dagny (72).[22]

In a telling conversation with Cherryl, Jim confesses his attitude toward all achievers: "Whatever they do, I can undo it. Let them build a track—I can come and break it, just like that!" He snapped his fingers. "Just like breaking a spine!" (879). When Cherryl suggests the significance of this statement, Jim retreats, in the manner typical of the evader:

> "You want to break spines?" she whispered, trembling.
>
> "I haven't said that!" he screamed. "What's the matter with you? I haven't said it!"
>
> (879)

Jim's response presumes that if he refuses to acknowledge his nature, it won't be what it is.

Lillian Rearden

Lillian reflects another variation of the death premise. She does not seem as directly committed as Jim does to destruction as such, but is more intent on deriving a certain sense of superiority over Hank, in particular. She acts, Hank gradually understands, as if she believes that puncturing his strength will somehow bestow value on her (974-75). She seeks to destroy him precisely for his virtues, "as the symbol of man's living power" (974).

Notice, for example, that after discovering that Hank is having an affair, Lillian does not acknowledge what that means about her place in his life. She does not mourn the erosion of their marriage as one would, if it were a genuine value. Rather, she is gleeful at what she regards as the "collapse" of his "vaunted sense of honor" and she relishes the prospect of his being condemned to the life of a "hypocrite." By remaining his wife, Lillian hopes to stand as a relentless reminder of his "depravity" (429-31).[23]

In response to Jim's saying that he would like to see Hank broken (noted above), Lillian muses: "I can't build his mills—but I can destroy them. I can't produce his Metal—but I can take it away from him. I can't bring men down to their knees in admiration—but I can bring them down to their knees" (899). When Lillian and Jim proceed to have sex (another pair of well-matched bed-fellows), their mutual motive is hatred of the good (900). Their intention is to degrade Hank's character (deluding themselves that they hold the power to do that). Similarly, when Lillian tells Dagny that it was she who had revealed Hank's affair to the bureaucrats who then used it to extort his signature on the "Gift Certificate," Dagny detects a hint of pleasure in Lillian's admission. It was *she* who took Rearden Metal away from him, Lillian boasts (849). Perversely, if not pathetically, she implies that this is something to be proud of. Lillian continues, in the conversation with Dagny:

> You can't fight me. You can't buy your way out of it, with those dollars which you're able to make and I'm not. There's no profit you can offer me—I'm devoid of greed. I'm not paid by the bureaucrats for doing this—I am doing it without gain. Without gain. Do you understand me?
>
> (849)

The evil of her attitude—her attitude toward *all* values—is exactly what Dagny, Hank, and the reader do come to understand about Lillian. What Lillian chooses not to understand is what this boast reveals about herself. For to not seek values is to not seek life.

Robert Stadler

Rand recognizes that most people are not self-conscious haters of the good.[24] Other forms of evil can be just as virulent, however. Stadler, for instance, represents a still different facet of evil than Jim and Lillian do. Stadler is a paradigm of pragmatism. As such, he is an appeaser of evil who thereby eases the way for the more deliberately destructive to be effective.[25]

On the surface, Stadler seems to champion a noble end: the progress of science. He tells himself that he must make concessions to opponents of reason (government bureaucrats, society's demands) in order to advance that end. Sacrifices are unavoidable (188-92, 1117-19). Yet over the course of the story, we see that his pragmatic compromises are not motivated by innocently misguided tactical judgments. Underneath, Stadler is a whim worshipper. As he pleads to Galt,

> What I saw ahead, what I wanted, what I *felt,* was not to be measured in their miserable dollars! I wanted a laboratory! I needed it! What do I care where it came from or how? I could do so much! I could reach such heights! Don't you have any pity? I *wanted* it!
>
> (1118)

Stadler's attitude is: he wants what he wants; getting it is all that matters. To do so, he tunes out the longer-term repercussions of the means he adopts and the preconditions for the results to be objectively valuable. He offers numerous rationalizations for his compromises, groping to persuade himself that one *must* use deceit and force, that "men are not open to truth or reason" (191), that he "had no choice" and "there is no way to live except on their terms" (1118). Stadler is, in principle, no different from any whim worshipper who elevates his desires above the facts of reality. His crime is in certain respects worse than Jim's, however, because Stadler had the mind to know better. Through the pragmatic course he adopts, his prodigious intellect is directed not to the creation of valuable knowledge, but to the State Science Institute's thwarting Rearden Metal and to Project X, an exercise of annihilation for its own sake (816 ff.). By the end, Stadler can no longer evade the life-destroying essence of his pragmatism when, in his extended confession *cum* apologia to Galt, he finds himself declaring: "You are the man who has to be destroyed" (1119). The either-or alternative between the path of reason and life and the path of irrationality and death is inescapable.

While aspects of both Lillian and Stadler certainly reflect hatred of the good as such, Jim is most fully and brazenly committed to this. Lillian, in however warped a way, believes that she gains some value out of standing in a certain relationship to a man such as Hank. Stadler kids himself that the noble end of science justi-

fies his corrosive means. Jim, however, seeks destruction as such. His campaign against values is much more total and unreserved than the others'. This is evident in his relationship with Cherryl, whom he repeatedly sets up to suffer failure and humiliation. Jim relishes his scheme to exterminate her ambition and to crush her earnest efforts to become the best person she can be (874). When she finally enjoys a successful social evening, he scolds her for embarrassing him (875).

In Jim, Cherryl confronts "evil for evil's sake" and the chilling realization that he is "a killer . . . for the sake of killing" (901, 904). His bloodthirsty character is even more plain when, during the torture of Galt, he is not satisfied with anything short of Galt's death. Consider his exchange with Ferris:

> "Jim, hasn't he had enough? Don't forget, we have to be careful."
>
> "No! He hasn't had enough! He hasn't even screamed yet!"
>
> "Jim!" cried Mouch suddenly, terrified by something in Taggart's face. "We can't afford to kill him! You know it!"
>
> "I don't care! I want to break him! I want to hear him scream! I want—"
>
> And then it was Taggart who screamed. It was a long, sudden, piercing scream, as if at some sudden sight, though his eyes were staring at space and seemed blankly sightless. The sight he was confronting was within him. The protective walls of emotion, of evasion, of pretense, of semi-thinking and pseudo-words, built up by him through all of his years, had crashed in the span of one moment—the moment when he knew that he wanted Galt to die, knowing fully that his own death would follow.
>
> (1144-45)

The horrific truth that Jim faces is that he had sought destruction for its own sake. His motive was "the lust to destroy whatever was living, for the sake of whatever was not" (1145).[26]

This is the death premise.

Given what the good is and does, hatred of the good is hatred of life. The paths of ***Atlas'*** villains help us to understand Galt's analysis of those on the premise of death:

> They do not want to own your fortune, they want you to lose it; they do not want to succeed, they want you to fail; they do not want to live, they want you to die; they desire nothing, they hate existence, and they keep running, each trying not to learn that the object of his hatred is himself.
>
> (1046)[27]

The worship of death is by far the most difficult thing that Hank and Dagny need to understand about their enemy before they can free themselves of evil's clutches. After a steady accumulation of hints and insights, however, both of them finally recognize the ugly truth. In a final conversation with his family when they are panicked by Hank's cutting off their allowance checks and they attempt fresh psychological tactics to win his renewed support, he realizes that his mother's desperate plea, "we want to live," is not true.

> "Why, no—" he started in quiet astonishment and ended in quiet horror, as the thought struck him fully, "I don't think you do. If you did, you would have known how to value me."
>
> (973)

To have heaped only mocking ridicule and "hammering derision" (975) on that which keeps them alive—Hank's work and achievements—reveals a damning picture of their regard for their lives. They do not know how to treat a value because they do not know what a *value* is. Why did they never bother to find out? Because they do not value their lives.

Dagny has a similar solemn epiphany when, in explaining to Jim and Cuffy Meigs the inevitably disastrous results that would come of their proposed course for the railroad, it dawns on her that both of them already know everything she could tell them about its futility. It simply does not matter to them (842). She realizes, more broadly, that "inanimate indifference was the permanent state of the people around her" (1111). Other encounters with the looters, under increasingly dire conditions, prompt the recurrent wonder about this seemingly alien species, "*did* they want to live?" (1109, 1111).

The Impotence of Evil

While recognition of their enemies' embrace of the death premise is critical to Hank's and Dagny's ultimate refusal to cooperate any longer, a second and closely related fact they must grasp is the impotence of evil and, correlatively, its utter dependence on the good. Given the essential nature of evil—"the irrational, the blind, the anti-real"—it contributes nothing to the furtherance of human life (1048). Those who seek to live have nothing to gain from evasion, irrationality, or any of its progeny. As Galt observes, a man has "no benefits to seek from human vices" (1023).

The demands that evil imposes on the good are not merely neutral or benign, however. They are poison. A man stands only to lose by any cooperation with evil. The "ransoms" that the heroes pay to buy off their adversaries do *no* good because they are paid in exchange for no positive value. Even the Wet Nurse eventually realizes this, evidenced in his explanation of his defending Rearden's mill from the assault to seize control of it. When Rearden observes, in semi-astonished admiration, that the Wet Nurse had stuck his neck out, he responds:

> But I had to! . . . I couldn't help them wreck the mills, could I? . . . How long was I to keep from sticking my neck out? Till they broke yours? . . . And what would I do with my neck, if that's how I had to keep it?
>
> (990)

The Wet Nurse has come to understand, in other words, that if living requires taking a great risk for the sake of his values, that is the price he will pay. For, after a long period of confused ambivalence, he has decided that *that* is what he wants: to live. And he gains nothing by taking any actions based on the antithetical code of death. (The contrast with Stadler is striking.)

Because evil is itself incapable of sustaining life, its endurance is entirely due to the support it receives from the good. The power of the irrational results from the power that the rational grant it. Early on, from his meeting with the official described as a "traffic cop," Hank detects that his adversaries need something from him, although he is not yet sure what it is (364-67). Later, at Thanksgiving dinner, Hank realizes that the guilt that Lillian seeks to induce depends on his accepting her standards (464-65), and he has a similar realization in discussing with Dr. Ferris the blackmail based on his affair with Dagny (559-62, 564-65). Much later, when Jim cries his assurance to Hank that "you'll do something" to maintain production even under suffocating restrictions (986-87), Hank more fully recognizes that he had made the looters' exploitation possible. They wholly depend on us, he realizes; we have been feeding our own predators. (Notice that when Hank begins to pay less deference to his family's wishes, refusing many of the demands that he had met in the past, even they have trouble any longer evading their abject dependence on him.) In another scene with Philip, Hank recognizes that Philip is asserting his weakness and lack of values as the source of his claim on him (927-32, especially 929-32; this is an instance of what Galt calls zero worship).

Francisco actually explains this dependence to Dagny, although she does not yet understand it. Francisco begins this exchange:

> "It was our own guilt. We produced the wealth of the world—but we let our enemies write its moral code."
>
> "But we never accepted their code. We lived by our own standards."
>
> "Yes—and paid ransoms for it! Ransoms in matter and in spirit—in money, which our enemies received, but did not deserve, and in honor, which we deserved, but did not receive. *That* was our guilt—that we were willing to pay. We kept mankind alive, yet we allowed men to despise us and to worship our destroyers. We allowed them to worship incompetence and brutality, the recipients and the dispensers of the unearned. By accepting punishment, not for any sins, but for our virtues, we betrayed our code and made theirs possible."
>
> (619)

Eventually, Dagny comes to see the validity of Francisco's charge that *she* acts as a destroyer, by sustaining the looters. She and Hank have both been unwittingly complicit in their own strangulation and in the assault on all that is good. What they finally appreciate is that, as Galt puts it, "evil [is] impotent . . . and . . . the only weapon of its triumph [is] the willingness of the good to serve it" (1048).

The Need to Withdraw

Crucial to Hank's and Dagny's acceptance of the need to abandon the looters' society is their eventual recognition that there is no refuge from the alternative between life and death; no "in between" can be sustained. *Every*thing is ruled by the law of excluded middle, including their own actions. They themselves, therefore, are either fundamentally for their happiness or against it; they support their lives or they support their deaths. "There's no such thing as a temporary suicide," as Hank observes (984). Dagny believes for a long time that concessions to her enemies will not damage her own values (evident in her readiness to pay ransoms as long as she can keep the railroad (636). Yet because of the inextinguishable, polar antagonism between life and death, any concession to evil is toxic to oneself.

Stadler is a chilling illustration of this. As a pragmatist, Stadler tries to skirt the fundamental alternative by circumscribing and compartmentalizing. He denounces Dagny and Galt as "impractical idealists" (790), implying that the ideal and the practical inhabit independent realms. People are the problem, he insists, implying that people supersede reality (818). Stadler pretends that he can somehow escape the either-or character of human existence—that he can survive without respecting the law of excluded middle, which means: without respecting the basic nature of reality, the fact that A is A. (The irony of his being the most respected mind in science is rich.) As a result of these evasions, we watch Stadler descend into ever greater depths of destruction, culminating in his call for the death of Galt. Yet in that scene, we also witness Stadler's *self*-destruction. He begins the meeting with Galt by pleading his innocence (against his internal knowledge of his guilt) and ends in agony, moaning "No . . . No . . ." against "the full meaning of his own words" that call for Galt's death (1117, 1119).

The sanction given by the good protects evil and obscures its utter dependence on the good. The cushion afforded by these "death buffers" makes it more difficult to grasp that the alternative *is* one or the other.[28] But it is recognition of the mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive alternative between the standard of life and the standard of death that enables the heroes to eventually see who their allies and enemies are and the actual path necessary for their happiness. When Francisco first tells

Dagny that she is the enemy whom he must defeat, rather than Jim or Mouch, she is disbelieving (636). Much later, in the gulch, Galt similarly observes that her course is that of his enemy (961). It is only when she and Hank understand the truth of this—that they have been aiding Galt's enemies and that to have been fighting against the "quitters" is to have been fighting against themselves—that they accept the imperative to strike.

As we noted earlier, while Hank and Dagny try to coexist with the looters, they do so on a mistaken premise. For as long as they believe that ransoms are their only means of achieving their values, it is their integrity in devotion to those values that leads them to continue that course. Eventual recognition of their opponents' death premise and of the complete dependence of evil on *their* support shows them the propriety of withdrawing that support. Contrary to Dagny's initial assumption, abandoning the looters' world is not "giving up." It is, rather, testament to her love of her life—as is captured in the requisite oath for entry into Galt's gulch: "I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man nor ask another man to live for mine" (731). And it reflects knowledge and acceptance of the necessary conditions of life. A man cannot live on the premise of death. It is when Hank and Dagny recognize *this,* in the end, alongside their adversaries' allegiance to death and the utter impotence of evil, that they join those who have seen it before them.[29]

Knowledge of the "Either-Or" in Action

Hank's and Dagny's growing understanding of the nature of their enemies clearly informs their actions. Indeed, a reader can only fully understand the novel if we grasp, as they do, the do-or-die opposition between good and evil. Without that, certain features of the story may seem unjustified. Let us examine next, then, how a proper understanding of the nature of good and evil illuminates what might otherwise be troubling aspects of the novel.

Consider, first, some of the book's terminology. "Destroyers" may initially seem too harsh a term to characterize either those who are recruiting producers to quit or those of Jim's ilk. To call them "destroyers" seems disproportionate to the actual disagreements between the opposing camps. Yet in fact, this term is exactly right, for it names the essence of what evil or irrationality does: it thwarts life. Destruction is destruction, regardless of the degree to which it is deliberate.

"Looters," similarly, may seem an ill-fitting epithet for the good guys' adversaries. These people are not breaking into stores and running away with merchandise, after all. Yet it is entirely apt, in truth, because this *is* their essential character. Given that those who are irrational create no values and thus have nothing to trade in their interactions with others, they rely completely on what others produce. Notice that in Mr. Thompson's most urgent, final attempt to persuade Galt to cooperate, for instance, all he can offer is the threat to use force (1102). In the qualities and values that human life depends upon, however, Thompson is penniless, as Galt points out to him (1102).[30]

We may have a little more difficulty accepting Galt's calling Dagny his "enemy" (961), responsible for the dangerous condition of the world for him. What this unsparing characterization reflects, however, is the fact that evil, on its own, *is* impotent. Whatever efficacy it enjoys is a result of the power that the good provide it by cooperating with its standards. Dagny's well-meaning intentions are not enough. Causality dictates proper action, not wishes, however innocent. And a person who is truly on the strikers' side will not make things any easier for those who would thwart them. Individuals who sanction evil in any form or degree are the enablers of evil, and thereby make themselves the enemies of the good.

When we turn from language to characters' actions, the principal choice that reflects the heroes' recognition of the either-or nature of their alternative is the decision to go on strike. There is no minimizing how profound an action that is. Galt, in launching the strike, is abandoning his motor and the joy of bringing its transformative potential to full fruition. *All* the strikers are leaving life as they have known it. They are giving up the specific values that they have been passionately devoted to (most significantly, their work). For Francisco, striking entails hurting the woman he cherishes. He must allow Dagny to think him a worthless playboy and must make her life harder by recruiting other producers, steadily draining material and spiritual nourishment away from her. Needless to say, it also pains him to abandon their relationship and to watch her struggle as she does.

By refusing to any longer cooperate with those who would destroy them, the strikers are leaving behind many decent people, such as Eddie Willers and Gwen Ives.[31] They are not indifferent to this. The heroes' regard for other rational men is palpable in several episodes. Hank's compassionate treatment of the Wet Nurse, well before he shows anything near to Eddie's or Gwen's moral stature, is indicative of Hank's genuine concern for anyone who does value life. Hank had detected certain promising traits in the Wet Nurse, an assessment later vindicated by his heroic performance fighting the assault on the mills. Similarly, Dagny's generosity toward Cherryl and the tramp testify to her respect for those on the premise of life. This sincere benevolence notwithstanding, the strikers recognize that they are not responsible for the welfare of others. The idea that they should risk their lives for others' need re-

flects the code of irrationality that they are rejecting. The strikers are compelled to desert the looters' world, knowing that some good people will suffer heavier burdens as a result, because no compromise between life and death is sustainable. If a man chooses to live, he must accept that his options are one or the other. "Life—and a little death" is not a viable prescription.

Once one understands why the strike makes sense, it is easier to dissolve any nagging misgivings about some of the other actions of the heroes. Hank's peremptory divorce of Lillian against her will, for instance, with "no alimony and no property settlement" (571), reflects his final recognition that after her treatment of him over their years together, he owes her nothing. Any obligation he incurred from marrying her has been long since discharged. She has offered no genuine value to him and she offers none now; indeed, she actively seeks to destroy him. Therefore, he has no reason to continue to support her in any way. Or consider Galt's refusal of Francisco's request to have Dagny spend her last week in the valley at his place (796). Acquiescing would have betrayed how Galt feels about Dagny. The truth is, *he* wants her. To have made such a sacrifice for Francisco would have faked the value that she is to him. Sacrifices fake the value that different things are, for a person, and they fake the nature of value itself. Any sacrifice of a man's values hurts *him*.[32]

Two of the heroes' other choices might seem more disturbing. When Dagny is 'captive' in the gulch, missing and feared killed by those outside, Galt does not allow her to notify Rearden that she is all right.[33] This might seem cruel, since the reader knows that Hank and Dagny are actually good guys. Once one understands the strict opposition between good and evil, however, the reasoning for this policy is not difficult to see. Anyone who is not a committed resident of the valley is an enemy, whether by design or by accident. This includes scabs and prospective members, such as Dagny and Hank. To the extent that they are still cooperating with the destroyers, they are making life harder for the strikers. Consequently, the strikers must give them no quarter. To lighten *their* load in any way would add to the strikers' own and endanger their safety. Bear in mind that there is nothing that the looters won't do in order to obtain Galt's cooperation. This is plain as we see them, increasingly desperate, resort to guns and torture.[34] Since the good guys who are still on the outside are unwittingly assisting their destroyers (and the destroyers of all who embrace the premise of life), any knowledge that these people possess of the gulch makes them dangerous, insofar as they might divulge its existence (inadvertently or under coercion) and thereby jeopardize its residents' security. In short, any cooperation with the world of the looters is a threat to all the strikers. And for that reason, the strikers cannot permit it. Hank's "need" for information about Dagny's welfare does not obligate the strikers to provide that information, particularly given that his course of action continues to oppose them.[35]

Finally, consider Dagny's shooting the guard during the rescue of Galt (1147-48). Does she really have to *kill* him?

The fundamental incompatibility between the code of life and the code of death makes the answer clear. The guard sees his choice as between obeying Ferris' orders or Dagny's. When he whines that he doesn't know what to do—how can *he* decide?—she matter-of-factly responds: "It's your life." This, Rand has shown, is what is at stake for each of us, in every decision. The guard tries to escape the fundamental alternative and his need to choose between the two, seeking to wiggle out to some enclave in between. But a man cannot escape that choice. The only alternative to life is destruction, as the guard's death makes graphic.

By defending Galt's imprisonment, the guard is defending the collectivist, altruist, irrational principles that have been eating Dagny alive. Dagny aims at his heart because *she* chooses life. Having done so—and with knowledge, now, of life's nonnegotiable conditions and of the nature of the enemy—she will take no chances by prolonging any threat to it. It's his life or hers, she realizes (and, of course, his life or Galt's). On behalf of their love of their lives, the heroes must kill that which is killing them.

The concern that any of the actions I have just analyzed is cruel or unduly harsh, we should recognize, reveals the lingering belief that a person *can* straddle incompatible standards, serving the mutually contradictory ends of one's life and one's death without cost. Galt observes as much about Dagny's decision of whether to leave the gulch: "If it seems hard, it's because you still think it does not have to be one or the other. You will learn that it does" (749). This is precisely what all those who eventually join the strike do learn.

Man cannot fudge the law of identity and the law of excluded middle. Life or death is either-or. The pursuit of one's life must be, correspondingly, uncompromising. Remember that the heroes come to realize that their opponents stand on the premise of death. Jim, Lillian, and Stadler are not misguided allies of theirs who are after the same thing. If they were, the heroes might reasonably think, "oh, they'll come around, eventually; they will appreciate that ours is the better way." The ugly fact is that the looters do not seek what the producers do. Accordingly, all that the looters are doing and can be expected to do in the future is obstruct the producers' lives. The only thing for those who love their lives to do, consequently, is to withdraw the sustenance they have provided to their destroyers and renounce the bur-

dens they have borne on their enemies' behalf. The heroes' deliverance depends on their total rejection of all irrational standards. Their full commitment to their own happiness depends on their recognition that anything less than that is suicide.

Moral Absolutism

Ayn Rand's moral philosophy is absolutist. The authority of moral principles is unequivocal. When a moral principle properly applies, it may not be violated. "There are two sides to every issue," Galt observes, "one side is right and the other is wrong, but the middle is always evil" (1054). Absolutism does not mean that all moral answers are easy to reach, but that there is a definite fact of the matter as to something's ultimate value and the proper course of action. The complexity of certain cases is not a license to pretend otherwise. A man's adherence to rational moral principles, correspondingly, must be uncompromising. "In the realm of morality nothing less than perfection will do" (1059).[36]

"Absolutism" is sometimes used slightly differently, to refer to the wide breadth of a moral code that governs all (or nearly all) of the kinds of choices that a man encounters. Such a code is absolute in being all-encompassing, allowing no "time-outs" from morality's demands. While the scope of morality's authority is strictly distinct from the relative rigor or laxness of any of its individual principles (that is, the question of whether or not it is ever permissible to violate a particular moral principle is independent of the number of issues that are governed by moral principles), these two senses of absolutism both stem from the same source, as we shall see. In what follows, I will use "absolutism" in the first sense, to refer to the fact that moral principles permit no violations. It will be apparent, however, that both senses of absolutism are often involved.

Interestingly, the absolutism of Rand's moral philosophy is the source of much hostility toward it. It is not only the substance of her moral theory—its unorthodox advocacy of egoism—that many people find objectionable, but the "extreme," unqualified character of that code. Skepticism toward absolutism is understandable, since its assertion is usually arbitrary (as with religious dogma). Moreover, given that the reigning moral doctrine of altruism requires violations (since no one could survive if he consistently obeyed a code of self-sacrifice), most people subconsciously conclude that any demand for perfect adherence is utterly impractical. This breeds a lack of seriousness about moral standards, as such.[37] While moral absolutism is too large a subject to explore in any detail here, it is useful to see that its foundation lies in the mutually exclusive alternative between good and evil that we have been examining. Before concluding, then, let me briefly indicate this basis for it.

Rand shows that the evil is anti-life. Whatever its particular manifestation or degree, whatever its motivation or an agent's awareness of its impact on a given occasion, that which is evil works to impede human life. Because the good is that which advances human life and because every choice that a man makes stands to either nourish or poison his life, the either-or between good and evil is both inescapable and of profound consequence. This either-or character of a man's choices thus dictates absolutism in regard to both morality's comprehensive scope and its "100%-ism," its refusal to permit compromise. A man cannot serve his life by pretending that morality's domain is more circumscribed than it is, just as a man cannot serve his life by pretending that violations of rational principles will be beneficial to him. Galt indicates the basic reason for this:

> In any compromise between food and poison, it is only death that can win. In any compromise between good and evil, it is only evil that can profit. In that transfusion of blood which drains the good to feed the evil, the compromiser is the transmitting rubber tube.
>
> (1054)[38]

The advancement of life, as we have seen throughout, has nothing to gain from that which damages life.

Notice that as long as the destructive nature of evil is murky to a person, he may understandably be lax about avoiding it. If morality is a game, then goodness is a game and the propriety of individual choices seems of no real consequence. A person must clearly grasp the stakes of moral principles in order to see the price of deviating from them. By making these stakes and the fundamental incompatibility of good and evil plain, Rand demonstrates that to compromise on a valid moral principle is to damage oneself. Such an action's premise is, in effect: "I'm not really committed to my happiness," or "I want to live—sort of, kinda, but not fully." Because all of a man's choices do carry consequences for his existence, however, the man who seeks to live cannot afford to drift between life-advancing and life-diminishing actions. Rather, he must identify each specific option that he contemplates as essentially a "death action" or a "life action," vigilantly restricting himself to the latter. It is the mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive nature of the alternative between life and death and, correspondingly, between good and evil, in other words, that dictates the absolutism of morality.

Just as ***Atlas*** shows that a man should lend no support to the evil of others, the point of moral absolutism is that he should tolerate no evil in himself. Such concessions to the irrational are equally self-destructive. Given that a man's fundamental alternative is between life and death, he can do himself no *good* by cheating on rational, life-fostering principles. Existence permits no tributes to competing Caesars.

In the end, moral "shoulds" are unyielding because reality is unyielding. Everything is governed by the law of excluded middle, including the effects of a man's actions. A moral code that is intended to serve human life must respect the conditions of life. And so must any person who seeks his life.

Conclusion

In the opening chapter of ***Atlas Shrugged,*** Eddie recalls a childhood conversation in which he and Dagny affirmed a devotion to "the best within us," even while he was uncertain of exactly what that was. It was not "business or earning a living," he thought at the time, but it consisted in "things like winning battles, or saving people out of fires, or climbing mountains." It seemed a matter of doing "whatever is right" (6).

In the book's final chapter, Eddie identifies this quality more accurately. What is right *is* "business and earning a living and that in man which makes it possible—*that* is the best within us, *that* was the thing to defend" (1166).

The best within us is that which wants to live—wholeheartedly, unequivocally, and with full understanding of what human life demands. ***Atlas*** illustrates that this love of one's life incorporates knowledge as well as desire. Love of life is not simply an ardent wish for one's happiness, the grip of an emotion or a mood. It is a deliberate, informed commitment. The quality within us that makes all values possible depends on knowledge of the causal requirements of one's happiness as well as the commitment to achieving one's happiness, in light of that knowledge. To love one's life—to withdraw all sanction of evil, to refuse tributes to false gods, to swear the oath—requires the complete repudiation of anything and everything that impedes life. As symbolized in Dagny's shooting of the guard, it requires the denial of all quarter to poisonous premises and practices.

The alternative between good and evil, Rand demonstrates in ***Atlas,*** is, fundamentally, the alternative between one's life and one's death. Coming to appreciate that no neutral territory is available, that one can take no action that does not support one or the other and that concessions to irrational standards achieve no value but bring only some form and degree of self-destruction, is what enables the heroes ultimately to recognize the imperative to strike. It is their understanding of the inescapable and mutually exclusive nature of the choice between life and death—and of how the choice between the rational and the irrational and between good and evil reflects this—that allows them to fully love their lives *in action.* It liberates them to pursue, without apology, the joy of their existence. And it allows them to experience that joy.[39]

Notes

1. Rand remarks on the theme in *The Art of Fiction,* Tore Boeckmann, ed. (New York: Plume, 2000), 17-18.
2. Extensive explanation can be found in Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness* (New York: Signet, 1964); Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1991), chapter 7; and Tara Smith, *Viable Values: A Study of Life as the Root and Reward of Morality* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), chapters 4 and 5.
3. By "reason," Rand means "the faculty that perceives, identifies and integrates the material provided by [man's] senses," *Atlas,* 1016. For more on the nature of reason, see Peikoff, *Objectivism,* 152-53, 159-63, 220, and on reason as man's primary virtue, 220-29. On the latter, also see Tara Smith, *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics—The Virtuous Egoist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 48-74.
4. Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," *The Virtue of Selfishness,* 13, emphasis in original.
5. Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," 16.
6. "Life" is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "the series of actions and occurrences constituting the history of an individual (especially a human being) from birth to death." 1971 edition. Also see definitions in the online edition, which include: "The property which constitutes the essential difference between a living animal or plant, or a living portion of organic tissue, and dead or non-living matter; the assemblage of the functional activities by which the presence of this property is manifested . . . ; Continuance or prolongation of animate existence; opposed to *death.*" Online edition. Also see Natalie Angier, *The Canon—A Whirligig Tour of the Beautiful Basics of Science* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 172-73, and Harry Binswanger, *The Biological Basis of Teleological Concepts* (Marina del Rey, Calif.: Ayn Rand Institute Press, 1990), 6-7, 63-64.
7. Particulars can also vary within a species, within boundaries that are set by the nature of that species. For discussion of this, see Smith, *Viable Values,* 99-101, 127-28, 183 and *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics,* 27, 30.
8. For thorough explanation of this, see Rand, "Causality vs. Duty," *Philosophy: Who Needs It* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1982), 118-119; Rand, "Objectivist Ethics," 17-18; Peikoff, *Objectivism,* 241-48; Smith, *Viable Values,* 84-90, 93-95, 101-3; *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics,* 21-23.

9. Rand, "*Objectivist Ethics,*" 25. Also see 25-27 and *Atlas,* 1014.

10. For much more on the intimate relationship between existence and flourishing, see Rand, "Objectivist Ethics," 25-27, and Smith, *Viable Values,* 125-51.

11. Notice that this is the familiar yardstick by which we assess well-being and distinguish health from disease or deficiency in all organisms. Moreover, in the realm of ethics, many philosophers have sought to explain that which is good for human beings as rooted in the needs of a man's nature (pithily expressed in Peter Geach's claim that "men need virtues as bees need stings"). See Peter Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 17; Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001); Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Berys Gaut, "The Structure of Practical Reason," in Garrett Cullity and Berys Gaut, eds., *Ethics and Practical Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); James D. Wallace, *Virtues and Vices* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press), 1978; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics.*

    For more on the difference between objective, subjective, and intrinsic value, see Smith, "The Importance of the Subject in Objective Morality: Distinguishing Objective from Intrinsic Value," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 126-48; Smith, "'Social' Objectivity and the Objectivity of Value," in *Science, Values, and Objectivity,* Peter Machamer and Gereon Walters, eds., *Science, Values, and Objectivity* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 143-71; Darryl Wright, "Evaluative Concepts and Objective Values: Rand on Moral Objectivity," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 149-81; and Wright, "Evaluative Concepts and Objective Value," paper delivered at Conference on Concepts and Objectivity, University of Pittsburgh, Sept. 22-24, 2006.

12. This formulation is borrowed from Wright.

13. Thanks to Greg Salmieri for conversation that led me to appreciate this point more keenly.

14. Rand, "For the New Intellectual," *For the New Intellectual* (New York: Random House, 1961), 10.

15. Similarly, in an earlier scene, she tells Danagger that she is not ready to surrender the world to the looters, 445.

16. See Rand, "Objectivist Ethics," 25. Insofar as evil is a moral concept, it refers to that which *deliberately* works to oppose human life. It is intentional human action and its products that can be evil, not accident or natural processes beyond man's control.

17. For discussion of the death premise, see Rand, "The Age of Envy," *Return of the Primitive: The Anti-Industrial Revolution,* Peter Schwartz, ed. (New York: Meridian, 1999), 130-58.

18. See his self-denunciation after their first night together, 254-55.

19. For excellent discussion of the death premise and the life premise, see Onkar Ghate, "The Death Premise in *We The Living* and *Atlas Shrugged,*" in Robert Mayhew, ed., *Essays on Ayn Rand's* We The Living (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004), 335-56.

20. He exemplifies hatred of the good for being the good, which Rand identifies as the lowest rung of evil in "The Age of Envy."

21. Before that, Jim "did not feel like moving to find his watch . . . it was too much trouble to look for his slippers," and Betty had resentfully declared: "I hate morning. Here's another day and nothing to do" (70).

22. Ghate offers this vivid example, "Death Premise," 344.

23. The punishment she seeks to impose is a graphic indictment of *her* character (see 431).

24. Rand, "The Age of Envy," 149. Also note her remark that "deliberately evil men are a very small minority," "Altruism as Appeasement," *The Objectivist* 5, January 1966, 6.

25. See his exchange with Dagny, 188-89.

26. I recommend reading the fuller account of what Jim realizes about himself, on 1145.

27. Eric Starnes' suicide on the wedding day of the girl he pines for (an act carried out in her bedroom, so as to be discovered by the newlyweds that night) is another grotesque illustration of this, 321. Thanks to Jason Rheins for reminding me of this example. Also see Rand, "The Age of Envy," 133-34.

28. Galt refers to such "buffers" on 1047.

29. Peikoff provides an illuminating explanation of how the virtue of integrity, in Rand's view, demands *seeing* one's alternatives accurately, more than strength of doing in the familiar idea of willpower, *Objectivism,* 261-62. This is clearly on display in *Atlas,* as we witness Hank's and Dagny's coming to see the true nature of their enemy and their unwitting role in their own destruction. (See

Gregory Salmieri, "Discovering Atlantis: *Atlas Shrugged*'s Demonstration of a New Moral Philosophy," in the present volume.)

30. Hank offers a similar rejoinder to Ferris' suggestion that Hank would have been better off had he taken the chance to join Ferris' side early on: "But if I had joined you . . . what would I have found worth looting from Orren Boyle?" (560).

    Separately, while people who do not create material values certainly sometimes receive goods voluntarily from others, this is not what is dominantly on display in *Atlas*. The heroes' adversaries are looters insofar as they claim that which they neither deserve nor have rights to.

31. The fate of Gwen Ives is actually left unstated, in the novel, but since we have no report that she reaches the gulch, it seems fair to refer to her alongside Eddie, here.

32. A sacrifice is the surrender of a greater value for a lesser value. It is not to be confused with an investment, in which a person forgoes a smaller value for the sake of gaining a greater value later. See Rand, "The Ethics of Emergencies," *Virtue of Selfishness,* 50-53; Peikoff, *Objectivism,* 232-36; Smith, *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics,* 38-40.

33. After explaining that residents in the Gulch are permitted no communication with those in the outside world, Galt does ask whether Dagny wishes to request a special exception. It is not entirely clear that he would grant it, however, if she were to make such a request, 763-64.

34. Reliance on force is the natural culmination of a code of irrationality. Once one abandons reason, force is the only fundamental alternative. See Rand, "Faith and Force," *Philosophy: Who Needs It,* 70-92.

35. Also bear in mind the logic of this decision from the perspective of the plot. At this stage in the story, Dagny has found a love greater than her love for Hank. Given this, placing Hank's well-being above Galt's would risk a greater value, Galt, for a lesser (albeit a tremendous) value, Hank. And we know by now that Dagny does not knowingly make sacrifices. (The choice of whether to contact Hank is not ultimately hers, of course, but this helps to explain why she doesn't resist the policy and seek an exception.)

    Later, by contrast, when Hank meets Galt and sends Dagny a note from the valley—"I have met him. I don't blame you" (1002)—the very different context justifies this breach of the barrier against communication between the two realms. Dagny is already aware of the gulch and of the strike. Hank is thus not disclosing any new, potentially threatening information. When Dagny had been in the valley, however, Hank had no clue of its existence.

36. Bear in mind that Rand firmly distinguishes an innocent error from a moral failing, writing that "errors of knowledge are not breaches of morality," and that "no proper moral code can demand infallibility or omniscience," "The Cult of Moral Grayness," *Virtue of Selfishness,* 88. It is also important to appreciate that the proper application of moral principles is contextual. See Peikoff, *Objectivism,* 274-276, and Smith, *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics,* 36, 94-105. On moral perfection, see Smith "Morality Without the Wink: A Defense of Moral Perfection," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 29 (2004): 315-31, and the discussion of pride in Smith, *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics,* chapter 9.

37. Consider Galt's observation: "A moral code impossible to practice, a code that demands imperfection or death, has taught you to dissolve all ideas in fog, to permit no firm definitions, to regard any concept as approximate and any rule of conduct as elastic, to hedge on any principle, to compromise on any value, to take the middle of any road. By extorting your acceptance of supernatural absolutes, it has forced you to reject the absolute of nature" (1054).

38. For related discussion of the way in which the power of the good depends on its consistency, see Peikoff, *Objectivism,* 264-67.

39. Thanks for many valuable comments to participants in a workshop cosponsored by the Anthem Fellowship for the Study of Objectivism at the University of Texas at Austin and the Ayn Rand Institute, held in Irvine, Calif. in January 2008: Tore Boeckmann, Yaron Brook, Onkar Ghate, Robert Mayhew, Jason Rheins, and Greg Salmieri, and to Debi Ghate, for co-organizing this workshop with me. Greg Salmieri's lecture course "*Atlas Shrugged* as a Work of Philosophy," given at OCON, Telluride, July 2007, was also very helpful for my thinking about these issues. Robert Mayhew's editorial comments have improved the paper.

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Bibliographical Note

Unless otherwise indicated, quotes from *Atlas Shrugged* will be followed by page number(s) in parentheses in the text and not by an endnote. Pagination refers to the original hardback edition (New York: Random House, 1957), which has the same pagination as the 1999 Plume quality paperback edition (which includes Leonard Peikoff's introduction to the thirty-fifth anniversary edition).

In some chapters, the author quotes from, and refers to information contained in, a series of biographical interviews that Ayn Rand gave in 1960-1961, the tapes and transcripts of which are in the Ayn Rand Archives. References will appear in the endnotes as: Biographical interviews (Ayn Rand Archives).

John C. Merrill (essay date 2009)

SOURCE: Merrill, John C. "Ayn Rand: Rational Self-Interest." In *Ethical Communications: Moral Stances in Human Dialogue,* edited by Clifford G. Christians and John C. Merrill, pp. 86-92. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2009.

[*In the following essay, Merrill speculates on Rand's importance to the field of communication ethics, saying that though her philosophy "is stern and self-centered," it nonetheless demonstrates a "social concern" in its emphasis on rational self-interest.*]

Arguably the modern thinker who best represents the egoistic stance in ethics has been the popular writer Ayn Rand (1905-1982), Russian emigrant turned novelist and nonacademic philosopher. Although largely shunned by more liberal professional philosophers, Rand has consistently rallied huge numbers (especially young people) to her individualism, self-enhancement, and rationalism.

Generations of twentieth-century college students were drawn to her strong and clear views of self-esteem, rational self-interest, freedom, honesty, hard work, and integrity. While many of her beliefs seem to reflect elements of existentialism, Ayn Rand was far from an existentialist. She was devoted to reason and had little patience with intuitivism, subjectivism, relativism, and emotion. Rationalism was the foundation of her philosophy.

Today, more than twenty-five years after her death, her novels—all reflecting her philosophy—are still selling well—hundreds of thousands of copies a year. Rand has never been very popular among academic philosophers, but increasingly they are paying more attention to her.[1] However, there is still serious concern among many philosophers about her "too conservative" ideas and her simplification of complex concepts. Asked to summarize her ideas briefly, she answered: "Metaphysics: objective reality. Epistemology: reason. Ethics: self-interest. Politics: capitalism."

A believer in objectivity and scientific certainties, Rand labeled her philosophy "objectivism" and combined her love of rationalism with a kind of Aristotelian concept of virtue and self-development. Her novels ***The Fountainhead*** and ***Atlas Shrugged*** and her many nonfiction books on philosophy (e.g., ***For the New Intellectual*** [1961] and ***The Virtue of Selfishness*** [1964]) illustrate her morality of rational self-interest. Any form of collectivism or community-led morality was anathema to her and she constantly emphasized egocentric motivation, meritocracy (rewarding excellence), and freedom in the communication arena. She condemned as irrational and immoral the ideas of any brand of collectivism and altruism. Often in opposition to establishment philosophers, Rand saw them as promoting statism in political philosophy, subjectivism in epistemology, and relativism, mysticism, and emotionalism in ethics.

Ayn Rand's ethical philosophy resonates to some degree with that of Erich Fromm, Aldous Huxley, and Ortega y Gasset in its belief that some values are better than others and all opinions are not equal; there are objective distinctions. A person should be guided by intellect, not by urges, wishes, and whims—everyone who lives by independent judgment and self-esteem. Of all the virtues, for Rand, rationality is basic. Her emphasis, as she writes in ***The Virtue of Selfishness,*** is on a per-

son's "full, conscious awareness" and "a commitment to the fullest perception of reality within one's power" (1965, 25-30). She sounds a lot like Bertrand Russell, who maintained that rational people always consider their own self-interest of the greatest importance. Russell believed that it is seldom in a person's interest to do anything that is harmful to others. Rand would agree with that.

She pulled no punches in her criticism of modern culture, which she saw as having too little respect for values and reason and peopled largely by those who are guided by feelings, instincts, wishes, whims, and revelations. She scorned the person who, like a zombie, rallied to every call of the collective, and viewed conforming to the group as an unethical thing to do (1961, 50).

Rand, in her objectivist philosophy, gave special attention to reason. Her "new intellectual" is a person who is intellect-directed, for rationality is the fountain of all virtues. Reason, the only source of knowledge for Rand, serves as a guide to values and action. She shows an affinity with Immanuel Kant in that her objectivist ethics stresses that one's life is an end in itself. With Kant she believed that every person is an end, not a means to an end set by others. But she disagreed with Kant in his belief that we cannot be certain about the true nature of reality. This did not fit her objectivist philosophy. Nor would she have much in common with the twenty-first-century postmodernists and their relativism and denial of objectivity.

Rand's emphasis on selfishness is not inconsistent with humanism, although it is often considered so. The basic social principle of her ethics is that all human beings are ends and must live for their own selves, neither sacrificing themselves to others nor sacrificing others to themselves. So we can see that her philosophy has consideration for others and their individual worth and freedom, and at the same time celebrates self-interest and self-esteem. In fact, for Rand, the ethical person cannot deny his or her worth as an actor; it is because of this that others can be treated with respect and dignity. Pride, real legitimate pride, for Rand, does not go before a fall. It is a valuable asset and, as she wrote in ***Atlas Shrugged,*** it is the "recognition of the fact that you are your own highest value and, like all of man's values, it has to be earned" (1957, 35).

For Rand, self-interest is the motivation for ethics. The moral person is not the one who sacrifices or forsakes life; rather it is the person who creates and makes life possible. The human life is the moral standard for Rand. The person's life is the moral standard, and one lives for his or her own sake and never sacrifices self to others or others to self. Live and let live. Be happy and let others be happy. This, for Rand, was the purpose of morality.

The idea that people should be treated as equals was, for Rand, ridiculous. People are not equal, and the very idea of egalitarianism interlocked with some kind of democratic idealism was not only impossible but harmful to human growth and progress. Merit and its encouragement is what is needed. Competition is the spark that ignites a vital and forward-looking society. It is the outstanding figures, the thinking and acting members of society, who push civilization forward. Excel, win, succeed, work hard, prize self, be authentic, love freedom, and accept personal responsibility. This is the essence of Rand's ethical—and pragmatic—philosophy. It is an ethical philosophy of rational self-interest and it is the idea of "rational" that keeps the self-interest from deteriorating into harmful and negative egocentrism that eliminates all social concern.

Let us summarize a few of the foundational ideas in Ayn Rand's ethics:

* rationality (commitment to perceive reality to the best of our ability)

* independence (relying on our own judgment and acceptance of responsibility for our actions)

* justice (identifying people for what they are and treating them accordingly)

* productivity (bringing knowledge, goods, or services into existence)

* pride (dedication to achieving the highest potential in our character and life without self-sacrifice)

* integrity (acting according to the judgment of our consciousness)

* honesty (never seeking values by faking reality)

An evil or unethical society, for Rand, comes about through individuals closing their eyes to it, doing nothing to prevent it, and thus in reality condoning it. She wrote in 1957 that the "evil of the world is made possible by nothing but the sanction you give it." And again referring to evil a few years later, she wrote that the spread of evil "is the symptom of a vacuum," and that whenever evil wins, it is "only by default"—by what she called "the moral failure of those who evade the fact that there can be no compromise on basic principles."

What is the kernel of Randian ethics or what does morality demand from us? Her answer: to struggle to the best of our ability to do good and avoid doing evil consciously. If we do that, Rand would regard us as com-

pletely good—if we never do evil deliberately. In the area of communication, Rand would realize that a discussant sometimes becomes angry and speaks or acts in a way that gives offense. This person should later (or immediately) recognize the mistake, and make apologies or amends. And, what's more, the person should be proud of having the maturity and courage to do so.

Aristotle probably made the deepest impression on Rand, even during her early college days in Russia. His metaphysics of objective reality and his concept of individual worth helped in the formation of her philosophy. Like Aristotle, Rand believed that an objective reality exists independent of the mind and is capable of being known. Even her ethics reflected Aristotle's to a certain degree: a person needs a system of moral guidelines to live successfully and flourish as a human being.

Another philosopher influencing Rand's thinking was Friedrich Nietzsche, who instilled in her the reverence for human potential, the heroic, a deep suspicion of altruism, and a firm opposition to collectivism. Although she had some disagreement with Nietzsche, she generally came to terms with him and in her introduction of the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of ***The Fountainhead*** she concluded with his statement that "the noble soul has reverence for itself" (1943).

Also along with Nietzsche, she had little respect for Immanuel Kant's "duty" ethics that, for her, enthroned selflessness and the devaluation of personal goals as moral benefits. For Kant, acting from duty and only from duty was ethical, whereas Rand saw this inflexible, formalistic, impersonal ethics as resulting in self-sacrifice.

The teleological stance in ethics, especially the utilitarian variety, got little respect from Rand, because of its altruistic emphasis. One of the few writers who has seriously opposed an altruistic stance, she has championed an ethics of "self-first" and has argued tirelessly for what she calls "rational self interest." As she writes in ***The Virtue of Selfishness,*** altruism is responsible, more than anything else, for the "the arrested moral development of mankind" (1964, 68).

Modern communicators should not be reluctant to criticize or to be politically incorrect. And she would urge them not to hesitate to judge. Rand would take Christ's injunction to "judge not" and make it read "judge and be prepared to be judged." Rand, like Nietzsche, saw religion as making people weak, timid, and group-minded instead of stressing personal growth and happiness. She would have little sympathy with the communitarians of today who, she would say, promote their goal of social stability and egalitarianism at the expense of personal worth and growth.

Ayn Rand disdained mysticism and intuitionism. She reacted against thinkers like the German Arthur Schopenhauer, perhaps the West's foremost intuitionist, who had little faith in rationalism and believed that a kind of instinctual morality based on Hindu mysticism was superior to other moralities. He was basically religious and poetic rather than prosaic and scientific. At least he mistrusted reason and enthroned feeling. And whereas Rand would exalt the will, Schopenhauer thought it should be subdued so that the transcendental world of aesthetic appreciation could be realized.

In one way Rand and Schopenhauer were similar. They would both seek happiness within the individual self rather than relying on others to make them happy. Both thinkers would be unconcerned with altruistic activity—but Rand would empower the ego and enhance personal striving whereas Schopenhauer would attempt to eliminate the ego so our restless pursuits are stilled and our desires are washed away. Rand would try to transcend the world and Schopenhauer would try to be one with the world, a kind of Oriental position.

The journalist and other public communicators have a responsibility to formulate clear, direct messages, to provide an objective view of the world around them, and to refrain from self-denying and hypocritical messages. For Rand, communication should accentuate, even glorify, the individual person and his or her potential value and creativity.

Although the individual person held a high place in existentialism, Ayn Rand had little use for that philosophy mainly because of its emphasis on emotion and instinct and its insistence that objectivity did not exist. Kierkegaard, one of the founders of modern existentialism, for example, denied any such thing as an impartial observer, believing instead that all truth is filtered through a subjective, psychological strainer. For Kierkegaard, a person could not step outside oneself and become a dispassionate, neutral observer. Rand tended to agree more with philosophers like the Frenchman Descartes (1596-1650) who said that passions, intuitions, and imagination are barriers to truth. He, like Rand, had more faith in objectivity and science, built on a rational philosophy.

Basically Ayn Rand was a proponent of peaceful relationships. Not really a pacifist (she believed that self-defense was morally correct), she did, however, oppose American involvement in both world wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and undoubtedly she would have opposed the U.S. invasion of Middle Eastern countries. She said of Vietnam that it represented the ultimate suicidal extreme of altruism on a global scale where

American soldiers were being killed for no real purpose. She certainly would have said the same thing later about the war in Iraq.

The modern communicator might find Rand's ideas and writing style useful in implanting ideas and information in a direct and forceful way. Capitalism being the main foundation of American mass communication, her dedication to individualistic egoistic ethics should find acceptance with most mass communicators. Competition and self-respect, along with the following of rational tenets, have an important place in communication ethics. Underneath protestations of public service, concern for others, and altruism lies a strong Randian self-love and egoistic motivation.

The modern communicator will surely find Rand's dedication to freedom of expression refreshing. This indicates her basic and abiding faith in the Enlightenment and its emphasis on honest and liberating dialogue. She was especially supportive of the individual vis-à-vis the state and the person threatened by institutional slavery. In short, she believed in freedom from any type of intellectual conformity. Such freedom, for her, was absolutely necessary for any consideration of ethics. For her, individual freedom trumps so-called rights. For example, such a concept as the "people's right to know" would place an obligation on communicators which they, in their freedom, should not have. Choice is necessary in communication ethics, and "rights" of receivers negates the communicator's choice (1964, 87-90).

Learn to value yourself, Rand has advised, and fight for your happiness. Be proud; recognize that you are your own highest value. Be rational and ethics will take care of itself. Don't scorn money; it is through money that we deal with one another and without it men become tools of others, she writes in ***Atlas Shrugged.*** "Blood, whips and guns—or dollars. Take your choice—there is no other." Happiness and good ethics, she believes, are derived from using reason, echoing A. L. Whitehead when he writes in *The Function of Reason* that the "very function of Reason is to promote the art of life."[2]

Ayn Rand's philosophy, for many communicators, will seem too harsh and its selfish emphasis will alienate many who wish to participate in dialogue on an equal basis with other communicants. Her moral philosophy is stern and self-centered and devoid of any desire to conform to the dictates of the social group. But she is convinced that when one follows his or her own light, the path through the difficult moral morass will be properly illuminated. If one is not careful, Rand would say, in the name of altruism this light will be lost, and the resulting darkness will eliminate all but conformist ethics.

Notes

1. David Glenn, "Advocates of Objectivism Make New Inroads," A8.
2. Alfred N. Whitehead, *The Function of Reason.*

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FURTHER READING

Biographies

Branden, Barbara. *The Passion of Ayn Rand,* Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1986, 442 p.

Biography of Rand by the wife of Nathaniel Branden and a close associate of the author during the 1950s and 1960s. Branden attempts to show in her portrait of Rand "that she was something infinitely more fascinating and infinitely more valuable than either goddess or sinner," calling her "one of the most remarkable and complex individuals of our time."

Burns, Jennifer. *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, 369 p.

Biography of Rand that seeks to place her and her work "within the tumultuous American century that her life spanned" and "to excavate a hidden Rand, one far more complex and contradictory than her public persona suggests."

Heller, Anne C. *Ayn Rand and the World She Made,* New York: Doubleday, 2009, 567 p.

Biography of Rand that includes some critical commentary on her life and writings, and that traces her development from her childhood in Russia, to her years in Hollywood as a screenwriter, and finally to her heyday in New York as a bestselling novelist and the leader of the Objectivist movement.

Johnson, Donald Leslie. *The Fountainheads: Wright, Rand, the FBI and Hollywood,* Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005, 231 p.
Investigates the relationships and interactions of Rand, the noted American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, Hollywood, and the FBI during the period when Rand's novel *The Fountainhead* was being made into a movie.

Pierpont, Claudia Roth. "Twilight of the Goddess." In *Passionate Minds: Women Rewriting the World,* pp. 199-221. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.
Biography of Rand that traces her development as a writer and philosopher and provides some critical commentary on her major works.

Criticism

Branden, Nathaniel and Barbara Branden. *Who Is Ayn Rand? An Analysis of the Novels of Ayn Rand,* New York: Random House, 1962, 239 p.
Biographical and critical study of Rand by her close associate, Nathaniel Branden, and Branden's wife, Barbara, which stresses "the historical and cultural significance of her ethics" as presented in both her fiction and philosophical writings. The volume also includes a biographical essay on the author by Barbara Branden.

Gladstein, Mimi Reisel. *The Ayn Rand Companion,* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984, 130 p.
Study of Rand's fiction and non-fiction writings, including a biographical profile of the author, a compendium of the characters in her fiction, and a final chapter that surveys the critical response to her work.

Gotthelf, Allan. *On Ayn Rand,* Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2000, 100 p.
Work "addressed primarily to the general reader and the undergraduate student of philosophy" that attempts to introduce Rand's philosophical thought.

Greenberg, Sid. *Ayn Rand and Alienation: The Platonic Idealism of the Objectivist Ethics and a Rational Alternative,* San Francisco: Sid Greenberg, 1977, 129 p.
Analyzes key concepts of "objectivist ethics," of which he is generally critical, and puts forth a "rational alternative" of Rand's philosophy of Objectivism.

Greiner, Donna and Theodore B. Kinni. *Ayn Rand and Business,* New York: Texere, 2001, 209 p.
Explores "the primary elements and the promise of Objectivism," as well as its "practical benefits," to the fields of business and industry.

Kelley, David. *The Contested Legacy of Ayn Rand: Truth and Toleration in Objectivism,* New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2000, 128 p.
Updated edition of his 1990 publication that sought to lay the groundwork for a "new Objectivist movement," one based on openness to critics of the system and tolerance of conflicting ideas.

Machan, Tibor R. *Ayn Rand,* New York: Peter Lang, 1999, 163 p.
Study that serves, not as "a comprehensive critical assessment of Ayn Rand's philosophy," but as "an introduction of her ideas to a broader readership who may have heard of Rand but not examined her ideas in detail."

McLemee, Scott. "The Heirs of Ayn Rand." *Lingua Franca* 9, no. 6 (September 1999): 45-55.
Traces the academic response to Rand's work and, especially, her philosophy of Objectivism, highlighting the reasons why, despite the author's success in American popular culture, her theories have been generally rejected by critics and both literature and philosophy professors.

Peikoff, Leonard. *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand,* New York: Dutton, 1991, 493 p.
"Comprehensive statement" of Rand's philosophy of Objectivism that covers "every branch of philosophy recognized by Miss Rand and every philosophical topic—from certainty to money, logic to art, measurement to sex—which she regarded as important." Peikoff was a close associate of Rand who studied under her for more than thirty years.

Seddon, Fred. *Ayn Rand, Objectivists, and the History of Philosophy,* Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2003, 193 p.
Essay written by a self-proclaimed "Objectivist" that seeks to correct certain errors in Rand's thought, especially her rather negative assessment of the philosopher Immanuel Kant.

Sheehy, Benedict. "The Challenge of Objectivist Ethics: Ethical Thinking in Business, Rationalism, and Ayn Rand." *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* 18, no. 2 (fall 2004): 231-40.
Explicates, then critiques, Rand's philosophy in terms of its theory of "self-interested behavior" and its relation to the field of business ethics.

Smith, George H. *Atheism, Ayn Rand, and Other Heresies,* Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1991, 324 p.

Emphasizes the heretical nature of Rand's philosophy, especially her atheism and her treatment of Objectivism as a type of religion.

Walker, Jeff. *The Ayn Rand Cult,* Chicago: Open Court, 1999, 396 p.

Describes Objectivism as "a classic cult phenomenon," focusing on the many aspects of Rand's writing and thinking that are "conducive to cultishness."

Welsh, John F. "Against the Predatory State and the Mystique of Race: The Objectivist Vision of Ayn Rand." In *After Multiculturalism: The Politics of Race and the Dialectics of Liberty,* pp. 29-60. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2008.

Discusses Rand's "critique of racism and multiculturalism" within the context of her Objectivist, or "rational egoist," philosophy.

Younkins, Edward W., ed. *Philosophers of Capitalism: Menger, Mises, Rand, and Beyond,* Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005, 374 p.

Includes essays on Rand and aspects of her Objectivist philosophy by a number of leading Rand scholars, including Younkins, Douglas B. Rasmussen, Chris Matthew Sciabarra, and Walter Block.

Additional coverage of Rand's life and career is contained in the following sources published by Gale: *American Writers Supplement,* Vol. 4; *Authors and Artists for Young Adults,* Vol. 10; *Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: Biography & Resources,* Vol. 3; *Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults,* Vol. 12; *Concise Dictionary of American Literary Biography Supplement*; *Concise Major 21st-Century Writers,* Ed. 1; *Contemporary Authors,* Vols. 13-16R, 105; *Contemporary Authors New Revision Series,* Vols. 27, 73; *Contemporary Literary Criticism,* Vols. 3, 30, 44, 79; *Contemporary Novelists,* Eds. 1, 2, 3; *Contemporary Popular Writers*; *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* Vols. 227, 279; *DISCovering Authors*; *DISCovering Authors: Canadian Edition*; *DISCovering Authors Modules: Most-studied Authors, Novelists,* and *Popular Fiction and Genre Authors*; *DISCovering Authors 3.0*; *Literature Resource Center*; *Major 20th-Century Writers,* Eds. 1, 2; *Major 21st-Century Writers,* (eBook) 2005; *Novels for Students,* Vols. 10, 16, 29; *Reference Guide to American Literature,* Ed. 4; *St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers,* Ed. 4; *St. James Guide to Young Adult Writers*; *Short Story Criticism,* Vol. 116; *Twayne's United States Authors*; and *World Literature Criticism,* Vol. 5.

How to Use This Index

The main references

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list all author entries in the following Gale Literary Criticism series:

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BLCS = *Black Literature Criticism Supplement*
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CMLC = *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*
DC = *Drama Criticism*
FL = *Feminism in Literature: A Gale Critical Companion*
GL = *Gothic Literature: A Gale Critical Companion*
HLC = *Hispanic Literature Criticism*
HLCS = *Hispanic Literature Criticism Supplement*
HR = *Harlem Renaissance: A Gale Critical Companion*
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The cross-references

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AAYA = *Authors & Artists for Young Adults*
AFAW = *African American Writers*
AFW = *African Writers*
AITN = *Authors in the News*
AMW = *American Writers*
AMWR = *American Writers Retrospective Supplement*
AMWS = *American Writers Supplement*
ANW = *American Nature Writers*
AW = *Ancient Writers*
BEST = *Bestsellers*
BPFB = *Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: Biography and Resources*
BRW = *British Writers*
BRWS = *British Writers Supplement*
BW = *Black Writers*
BYA = *Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults*
CA = *Contemporary Authors*
CAAS = *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*
CABS = *Contemporary Authors Bibliographical Series*
CAD = *Contemporary American Dramatists*
CANR = *Contemporary Authors New Revision Series*
CAP = *Contemporary Authors Permanent Series*
CBD = *Contemporary British Dramatists*
CCA = *Contemporary Canadian Authors*
CD = *Contemporary Dramatists*
CDALB = *Concise Dictionary of American Literary Biography*

CDALBS = *Concise Dictionary of American Literary Biography Supplement*
CDBLB = *Concise Dictionary of British Literary Biography*
CMW = *St. James Guide to Crime & Mystery Writers*
CN = *Contemporary Novelists*
CP = *Contemporary Poets*
CPW = *Contemporary Popular Writers*
CSW = *Contemporary Southern Writers*
CWD = *Contemporary Women Dramatists*
CWP = *Contemporary Women Poets*
CWRI = *St. James Guide to Children's Writers*
CWW = *Contemporary World Writers*
DA = *DISCovering Authors*
DA3 = *DISCovering Authors 3.0*
DAB = *DISCovering Authors: British Edition*
DAC = *DISCovering Authors: Canadian Edition*
DAM = *DISCovering Authors: Modules*
DRAM: *Dramatists Module;* ***MST:*** *Most-studied Authors Module;*
MULT: *Multicultural Authors Module;* ***NOV:*** *Novelists Module;*
POET: *Poets Module;* ***POP:*** *Popular Fiction and Genre Authors Module*
DFS = *Drama for Students*
DLB = *Dictionary of Literary Biography*
DLBD = *Dictionary of Literary Biography Documentary Series*
DLBY = *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook*
DNFS = *Literature of Developing Nations for Students*
EFS = *Epics for Students*
EW = *European Writers*
EWL = *Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century*
EXPN = *Exploring Novels*
EXPP = *Exploring Poetry*
EXPS = *Exploring Short Stories*
FANT = *St. James Guide to Fantasy Writers*
FW = *Feminist Writers*
GFL = *Guide to French Literature,* Beginnings to 1789, 1798 to the Present
GLL = *Gay and Lesbian Literature*
HGG = *St. James Guide to Horror, Ghost & Gothic Writers*
HW = *Hispanic Writers*
IDFW = *International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers: Writers and Production Artists*
IDTP = *International Dictionary of Theatre: Playwrights*
LAIT = *Literature and Its Times*
LAW = *Latin American Writers*
JRDA = *Junior DISCovering Authors*
MAICYA = *Major Authors and Illustrators for Children and Young Adults*
MAICYAS = *Major Authors and Illustrators for Children and Young Adults Supplement*
MAWW = *Modern American Women Writers*
MJW = *Modern Japanese Writers*
MTCW = *Major 20th-Century Writers*
NCFS = *Nonfiction Classics for Students*
NFS = *Novels for Students*
PAB = *Poets: American and British*
PFS = *Poetry for Students*
RGAL = *Reference Guide to American Literature*
RGEL = *Reference Guide to English Literature*
RGSF = *Reference Guide to Short Fiction*
RGWL = *Reference Guide to World Literature*
RHW = *Twentieth-Century Romance and Historical Writers*
SAAS = *Something about the Author Autobiography Series*
SATA = *Something about the Author*
SFW = *St. James Guide to Science Fiction Writers*
SSFS = *Short Stories for Students*
TCWW = *Twentieth-Century Western Writers*
WLIT = *World Literature and Its Times*
WP = *World Poets*
YABC = *Yesterday's Authors of Books for Children*
YAW = *St. James Guide to Young Adult Writers*

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See also AAYA 51; AITN 1; AMW; CA 5-8R; CABS 3; CAD; CANR 8, 54, 74, 124; CD 5, 6; CDALB 1941-1968; DA; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM DRAM, MST; DFS 25; DLB 7, 266; EWL 3; INT CANR-8; LAIT 4; LMFS 2; MAL 5; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005; RGAL 4; TUS
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Baxter, Charles 1947- ..... **CLC 45, 78**
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Brooks, Cleanth 1906-1994 . **CLC 24, 86, 110**
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Brown, Dee Alexander
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Chase, Adam
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Chase, Mary (Coyle) 1907-1981 ..... **DC 1**
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Chateaubriand, Francois Rene de
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See also CA 131; CANR 56, 81, 137; DAM MULT; DLB 122; FW; HW 1, 2; LLW; MAL 5; MTCW 2; MTFW 2005
Chaviaras, Strates 1935- ..... **CLC 33**
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Chester, Alfred 1929(?)-1971 ..... **CLC 49**
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Chesterton, G. K. 1874-1936 . **PC 28; SSC 1, 46, 148; TCLC 1, 6, 64**
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Chiang, Pin-chin 1904-1986 ..... **CLC 68**
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Chin, Frank 1940- ..... **AAL; CLC 135; DC 7**
See also CA 33-36R; CAD; CANR 71; CD 5, 6; DAM MULT; DLB 206, 312; LAIT 5; RGAL 4

Chin, Frank Chew, Jr.
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Chin, Marilyn 1955- ..... **PC 40**
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Chung, Sonya ..... **CLC 318**
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Churchill, Charles 1731-1764 ..... **LC 3**
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Ciardi, John (Anthony) 1916-1986 . **CLC 10, 40, 44, 129; PC 69**
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Clark, Brian (Robert)
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Clark, Eleanor 1913-1996 ..... **CLC 5, 19**
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Clark, J. P.
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Clark, Kenneth (Mackenzie)
1903-1983 ..... **TCLC 147**
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Clark-Bekederemo, J. P. 1935- ..... **BLC 1:1; CLC 38; DC 5**
See also AAYA 79; AFW; BW 1; CA 65-68; CANR 16, 72; CD 5, 6; CDWLB 3; CP 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; DAM DRAM, MULT; DFS 13; DLB 117; EWL 3; MTCW 2; MTFW 2005; RGEL 2
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Clarke, Arthur Charles
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Forbes, Esther 1891-1967 ..... **CLC 12**
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Forten, Charlotte
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Fox, William Price, Jr.
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Frank, Bruno 1887-1945 ..... **TCLC 81**
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Frazer, Andrew
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Frazer, J(ames) G(eorge)
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Frye, (Herman) Northrop 1912-1991 ..... **CLC 24, 70; TCLC 165**
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Fuchs, Daniel 1909-1993 ..... **CLC 8, 22**
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Furey, Michael
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Gaiman, Neil 1960- ..... **CLC 195, 319**
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Gaines, Ernest J. 1933- ..... **BLC 1:2; CLC 3, 11, 18, 86, 181, 300; SSC 68, 137**
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Gass, William H. 1924- . **CLC 1, 2, 8, 11, 15, 39, 132; SSC 12**
See also AMWS 6; CA 17-20R; CANR 30, 71, 100; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 2, 227; EWL 3; MAL 5; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005; RGAL 4
Gassendi, Pierre 1592-1655 ..... **LC 54**
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Gasset, Jose Ortega y
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Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. 1950- ... **BLCS; CLC 65**
See also AMWS 20; BW 2, 3; CA 109; CANR 25, 53, 75, 125, 203; CSW; DA3; DAM MULT; DLB 67; EWL 3; MAL 5; MTCW 2; MTFW 2005; RGAL 4
Gatos, Stephanie
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Gautier, Theophile 1811-1872 ... **NCLC 1, 59, 243; PC 18; SSC 20**
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Gautreaux, Tim 1947- .... **CLC 270; SSC 125**
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Gautreaux, Tim Martin
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Gay, John 1685-1732 ..... **DC 39; LC 49, 176**
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Gay, Oliver
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Gay, Peter 1923- ..... **CLC 158**
See also CA 13-16R; CANR 18, 41, 77, 147, 196; INT CANR-18; RGHL
Gay, Peter Jack
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Gaye, Marvin (Pentz, Jr.)
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See also CA 119; 133; CANR 96, 186; DLB 271
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Gee, Maggie 1948- ..... **CLC 57**
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Geiogamah, Hanay 1945- ..... **NNAL**
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Gelbart, Larry 1928-2009 ..... **CLC 21, 61**
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Gelbart, Larry Simon
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Gelber, Jack 1932-2003 ..... **CLC 1, 6, 14, 79**
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Gellhorn, Martha 1908-1998 ..... **CLC 14, 60**
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Genet, Jean 1910-1986 .. **CLC 1, 2, 5, 10, 14, 44, 46; DC 25; TCLC 128**
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Genlis, Stephanie-Felicite Ducrest 1746-1830 ..... **NCLC 166**
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Gent, Peter 1942-2011 ..... **CLC 29**
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Geoffrey of Monmouth c. 1100-1155 ..... **CMLC 44**
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George, Stefan (Anton) 1868-1933 . **TCLC 2, 14**
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Georges, Georges Martin
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Gerhardie, William Alexander 1895-1977 ..... **CLC 5**
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Germain, Sylvie 1954- ..... **CLC 283**
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Gerson, Jean 1363-1429 ..... **LC 77**
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Gerstler, Amy 1956- ..... **CLC 70**
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Gertler, T. ..... **CLC 34**
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Ghalib, Asadullah Khan 1797-1869 ..... **NCLC 39, 78**
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Ghiselin, Brewster 1903-2001 ..... **CLC 23**
See also CA 13-16R; CAAS 10; CANR 13; CP 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
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Ghose, Zulfikar 1935- ..... **CLC 42, 200**
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Ghosh, Amitav 1956- ..... **CLC 44, 153, 300**
See also CA 147; CANR 80, 158, 205; CN 6, 7; DLB 323; WWE 1
Giacosa, Giuseppe 1847-1906 ..... **TCLC 7**
See also CA 104
Gibb, Lee
See Waterhouse, Keith
Gibbon, Edward 1737-1794 ..... **LC 97**
See also BRW 3; DLB 104, 336; RGEL 2
Gibbon, Lewis Grassic
See Mitchell, James Leslie
Gibbons, Kaye 1960- ..... **CLC 50, 88, 145**
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Gibran, Kahlil 1883-1931 ..... **PC 9; TCLC 1, 9, 205**
See also AMWS 20; CA 104; 150; DA3; DAM POET, POP; DLB 346; EWL 3; MTCW 2; WLIT 6
Gibran, Khalil
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Gibson, Mel 1956- ..... **CLC 215**
See also AAYA 80
Gibson, William 1914-2008 ..... **CLC 23**
See also CA 9-12R; 279; CAD; CANR 9, 42, 75, 125; CD 5, 6; DA; DAB; DAC; DAM DRAM, MST; DFS 2, 28; DLB 7; LAIT 2; MAL 5; MTCW 2; MTFW 2005; SATA 66; SATA-Obit 199; YAW
Gibson, William 1948- ..... **CLC 39, 63, 186, 192; SSC 52**
See also AAYA 12, 59; AMWS 16; BPFB 2; CA 126; 133; CANR 52, 90, 106, 172; CN 6, 7; CPW; DA3; DAM POP; DLB 251; MTCW 2; MTFW 2005; NFS 38; SCFW 2; SFW 4; SSFS 26
Gibson, William Ford
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Gide, Andre 1869-1951 ..... **SSC 13; TCLC 5, 12, 36, 177; WLC 3**
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Gide, Andre Paul Guillaume
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Gifford, Barry 1946- ..... **CLC 34**
See also CA 65-68; CANR 9, 30, 40, 90, 180
Gifford, Barry Colby
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Gilbert, Frank
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Gilbert, W(illiam) S(chwenck) 1836-1911 ..... **TCLC 3**
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Gilbert of Poitiers c. 1085-1154 .... **CMLC 85**
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Gilchrist, Ellen 1935- ..... **CLC 34, 48, 143, 264; SSC 14, 63**
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Gilchrist, Ellen Louise
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Gilliam, Terry Vance
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Gillian, Jerry
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Gilliatt, Penelope (Ann Douglass) 1932-1993 ..... **CLC 2, 10, 13, 53**
See also AITN 2; CA 13-16R; 141; CANR 49; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; DLB 14
Gilligan, Carol 1936- ..... **CLC 208**
See also CA 142; CANR 121, 187; FW
Gilman, Charlotte Anna Perkins Stetson
See Gilman, Charlotte Perkins
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins 1860-1935 ..... **SSC 13, 62; TCLC 9, 37, 117, 201**
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Gilmore, Mary (Jean Cameron) 1865-1962 ..... **PC 87**
See also CA 114; DLB 260; RGEL 2; SATA 49
Gilmour, David 1946- ..... **CLC 35**
Gilpin, William 1724-1804 ..... **NCLC 30**
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Gilroy, Frank D(aniel) 1925- ..... **CLC 2**
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Gilstrap, John 1957(?)- ..... **CLC 99**
See also AAYA 67; CA 160; CANR 101
Ginsberg, Allen 1926-1997 .... **CLC 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 13, 36, 69, 109; PC 4, 47; TCLC 120; WLC 3**
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Ginzburg, Eugenia
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Ginzburg, Evgeniia 1904-1977 ..... **CLC 59**
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Ginzburg, Natalia 1916-1991 ..... **CLC 5, 11, 54, 70; SSC 65; TCLC 156**
See also CA 85-88; 135; CANR 33; DFS 14; DLB 177; EW 13; EWL 3; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005; RGHL; RGWL 2, 3

Gioia, (Michael) Dana 1950- ..... **CLC 251**
See also AMWS 15; CA 130; CANR 70, 88; CP 6, 7; DLB 120, 282; PFS 24

Giono, Jean 1895-1970 .... **CLC 4, 11; TCLC 124**
See also CA 45-48; 29-32R; CANR 2, 35; DLB 72, 321; EWL 3; GFL 1789 to the Present; MTCW 1; RGWL 2, 3

Giovanni, Nikki 1943- ... **BLC 1:2; CLC 2, 4, 19, 64, 117; PC 19; WLCS**
See also AAYA 22, 85; AITN 1; BW 2, 3; CA 29-32R; CAAS 6; CANR 18, 41, 60, 91, 130, 175; CDALBS; CLR 6, 73; CP 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; CSW; CWP; CWRI 5; DA; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM MST, MULT, POET; DLB 5, 41; EWL 3; EXPP; INT CANR-18; MAICYA 1, 2; MAL 5; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005; PFS 17, 28, 35; RGAL 4; SATA 24, 107, 208; TUS; YAW

Giovanni, Yolanda Cornelia
See Giovanni, Nikki

Giovanni, Yolande Cornelia
See Giovanni, Nikki

Giovanni, Yolande Cornelia, Jr.
See Giovanni, Nikki

Giovene, Andrea 1904-1998 ..... **CLC 7**
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Gippius, Zinaida 1869-1945 ..... **TCLC 9**
See also CA 106; 212; DLB 295; EWL 3

Gippius, Zinaida Nikolaevna
See Gippius, Zinaida

Giraudoux, Jean 1882-1944 ... **DC 36; TCLC 2, 7**
See also CA 104; 196; DAM DRAM; DFS 28; DLB 65, 321; EW 9; EWL 3; GFL 1789 to the Present; RGWL 2, 3; TWA

Giraudoux, Jean-Hippolyte
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Gironella, Jose Maria (Pous)
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See also CA 101; 212; EWL 3; RGWL 2, 3

Gissing, George (Robert)
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See also BRW 5; CA 105; 167; DLB 18, 135, 184; RGEL 2; TEA

Gitlin, Todd 1943- ..... **CLC 201**
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Gladkov, Fyodor (Vasilyevich)
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Gladstone, William Ewart
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Glanville, Brian (Lester) 1931- ..... **CLC 6**
See also CA 5-8R; CAAS 9; CANR 3, 70; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 15, 139; SATA 42

Glasgow, Ellen 1873-1945 ..... **SSC 34, 130; TCLC 2, 7, 239**
See also AMW; CA 104; 164; DLB 9, 12; MAL 5; MBL; MTCW 2; MTFW 2005; RGAL 4; RHW; SSFS 9; TUS

Glasgow, Ellen Anderson Gholson
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Glaspell, Susan 1882(?)-1948 ..... **DC 10; SSC 41, 132; TCLC 55, 175**
See also AMWS 3; CA 110; 154; DFS 8, 18, 24; DLB 7, 9, 78, 228; MBL; RGAL 4; SSFS 3; TCWW 2; TUS; YABC 2

Glassco, John 1909-1981 ..... **CLC 9**
See also CA 13-16R; 102; CANR 15; CN 1, 2; CP 1, 2, 3; DLB 68

Glasscock, Amnesia
See Steinbeck, John

Glasser, Ronald J. 1940(?)- ..... **CLC 37**
See also CA 209

Glassman, Joyce
See Johnson, Joyce

Gleick, James 1954- ..... **CLC 147**
See also CA 131; 137; CANR 97; INT CA-137

Gleick, James W.
See Gleick, James

Glendinning, Victoria 1937- ..... **CLC 50**
See also CA 120; 127; CANR 59, 89, 166; DLB 155

Glissant, Edouard 1928-2011 ..... **CLC 10, 68**
See also CA 153; CANR 111; CWW 2; DAM MULT; EWL 3; RGWL 3

Glissant, Edouard Mathieu
See Glissant, Edouard

Gloag, Julian 1930- ..... **CLC 40**
See also AITN 1; CA 65-68; CANR 10, 70; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Glowacki, Aleksander
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Gluck, Louise 1943- . **CLC 7, 22, 44, 81, 160, 280; PC 16**
See also AMWS 5; CA 33-36R; CANR 40, 69, 108, 133, 182; CP 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; CWP; DA3; DAM POET; DLB 5; MAL 5; MTCW 2; MTFW 2005; PFS 5, 15; RGAL 4; TCLE 1:1

Gluck, Louise Elisabeth
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Glyn, Elinor 1864-1943 ..... **TCLC 72**
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Gobineau, Joseph-Arthur
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Godard, Jean-Luc 1930- ..... **CLC 20**
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Godden, (Margaret) Rumer
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See also AAYA 6; BPFB 2; BYA 2, 5; CA 5-8R; 172; CANR 4, 27, 36, 55, 80; CLR 20; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; CWRI 5; DLB 161; MAICYA 1, 2; RHW; SAAS 12; SATA 3, 36; SATA-Obit 109; TEA

Godoy Alcayaga, Lucila
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Godwin, Gail 1937- ..... **CLC 5, 8, 22, 31, 69, 125**
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Godwin, Gail Kathleen
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Godwin, William 1756-1836 .. **NCLC 14, 130**
See also BRWS 15; CDBLB 1789-1832; CMW 4; DLB 39, 104, 142, 158, 163, 262, 336; GL 2; HGG; RGEL 2

Goebbels, Josef
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Goebbels, (Paul) Joseph
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Goebbels, Joseph Paul
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See also CDWLB 2; DA; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM DRAM, MST, POET; DLB 94; EW 5; GL 2; LATS 1; LMFS 1:1; RGWL 2, 3; TWA

Gogarty, Oliver St. John
1878-1957 ..... **PC 121; TCLC 15**
See also CA 109; 150; DLB 15, 19; RGEL 2

Gogol, Nikolai 1809-1852 .... **DC 1; NCLC 5, 15, 31, 162; SSC 4, 29, 52, 145; WLC 3**
See also DA; DAB; DAC; DAM DRAM, MST; DFS 12; DLB 198; EW 6; EXPS; RGSF 2; RGWL 2, 3; SSFS 7, 32; TWA

Gogol, Nikolai Vasilyevich
See Gogol, Nikolai

Goines, Donald 1937(?)-1974 ..... **BLC 1:2; CLC 80**
See also AITN 1; BW 1, 3; CA 124; 114; CANR 82; CMW 4; DA3; DAM MULT, POP; DLB 33

Gold, Herbert 1924- ... **CLC 4, 7, 14, 42, 152**
See also CA 9-12R; CANR 17, 45, 125, 194; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 2; DLBY 1981; MAL 5

Goldbarth, Albert 1948- ..... **CLC 5, 38**
See also AMWS 12; CA 53-56; CANR 6, 40, 206; CP 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 120

Goldberg, Anatol 1910-1982 ..... **CLC 34**
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Goldemberg, Isaac 1945- ..... **CLC 52**
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Golding, Arthur 1536-1606 ..... **LC 101**
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Golding, William 1911-1993 . **CLC 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 17, 27, 58, 81; WLC 3**
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Golding, William Gerald
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Goldman, Emma 1869-1940 ..... **TCLC 13**
See also CA 110; 150; DLB 221; FW; RGAL 4; TUS

Goldman, Francisco 1954- ..... **CLC 76, 298**
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Goldman, William 1931- ..... **CLC 1, 48**
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Goldman, William W.
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Goldmann, Lucien 1913-1970 ..... **CLC 24**
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Goldoni, Carlo 1707-1793 ..... **LC 4, 152**
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Goldsmith, Oliver 1730(?)-1774 .... **DC 8; LC 2, 48, 122; PC 77; WLC 3**
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Goldsmith, Peter
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Goldstein, Rebecca 1950- ..... **CLC 239**
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Gombrowicz, Witold 1904-1969 .... **CLC 4, 7, 11, 49; TCLC 247**
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Gomez de Avellaneda, Gertrudis 1814-1873 ..... **NCLC 111**
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Gomez de la Serna, Ramon 1888-1963 ..... **CLC 9**
See also CA 153; 116; CANR 79; EWL 3; HW 1, 2
Gomez-Pena, Guillermo 1955- ..... **CLC 310**
See also CA 147; CANR 117
Goncharov, Ivan Alexandrovich 1812-1891 ..... **NCLC 1, 63**
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Goncourt, Edmond de 1822-1896 ... **NCLC 7**
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Goncourt, Edmond Louis Antoine Huot de
See Goncourt, Edmond de
Goncourt, Jules Alfred Huot de
See Goncourt, Jules de
Goncourt, Jules de 1830-1870 ..... **NCLC 7**
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Gongora (y Argote), Luis de 1561-1627 ..... **LC 72**
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Gonzalez Martinez, Enrique
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Gonzalez Martinez, Enrique 1871-1952 ..... **TCLC 72**
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Goodison, Lorna 1947- ..... **BLC 2:2; PC 36**
See also CA 142; CANR 88, 189; CP 5, 6, 7; CWP; DLB 157; EWL 3; PFS 25
Goodman, Allegra 1967- ..... **CLC 241**
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Goodman, Paul 1911-1972 ..... **CLC 1, 2, 4, 7**
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Gordon, Adam Lindsay 1833-1870 ..... **NCLC 21**
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Gordon, Caroline 1895-1981 . **CLC 6, 13, 29, 83; SSC 15; TCLC 241**
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Gordon, Charles William 1860-1937 ..... **TCLC 31**
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Gordon, Mary 1949- .. **CLC 13, 22, 128, 216; SSC 59**
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Gordon, Mary Catherine
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Gordon, N. J.
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Gordon, Sol 1923- ..... **CLC 26**
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Hoffmann, E(rnst) T(heodor) A(madeus) 1776-1822 ..... **NCLC 2, 183; SSC 13, 92**
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Hofmann, Gert 1931-1993 ..... **CLC 54**
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Hofmannsthal, Hugo von 1874-1929 ... **DC 4; TCLC 11**
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Hogan, Linda 1947- .... **CLC 73, 290; NNAL; PC 35**
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Hogarth, Charles
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Hogarth, Emmett
See Polonsky, Abraham (Lincoln)
Hogarth, William 1697-1764 ..... **LC 112**
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Hogg, James 1770-1835 .. **NCLC 4, 109; SSC 130**
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Holbach, Paul-Henri Thiry 1723-1789 ..... **LC 14**
See also DLB 313
Holberg, Ludvig 1684-1754 ..... **LC 6**
See also DLB 300; RGWL 2, 3
Holbrook, John
See Vance, Jack
Holcroft, Thomas 1745-1809 ..... **NCLC 85**
See also DLB 39, 89, 158; RGEL 2
Holden, Ursula 1921- ..... **CLC 18**
See also CA 101; CAAS 8; CANR 22
Holderlin, (Johann Christian) Friedrich 1770-1843 ..... **NCLC 16, 187; PC 4**
See also CDWLB 2; DLB 90; EW 5; RGWL 2, 3
Holdstock, Robert 1948-2009 ..... **CLC 39**
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Holdstock, Robert P.
See Holdstock, Robert
Holinshed, Raphael fl. 1580- ..... **LC 69**
See also DLB 167; RGEL 2
Holland, Isabelle (Christian) 1920-2002 ..... **CLC 21**
See also AAYA 11, 64; CA 21-24R; 205; CAAE 181; CANR 10, 25, 47; CLR 57; CWRI 5; JRDA; LAIT 4; MAICYA 1, 2; SATA 8, 70; SATA-Essay 103; SATA-Obit 132; WYA
Holland, Marcus
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Hollander, John 1929- .. **CLC 2, 5, 8, 14; PC 117**
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Hollander, Paul
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Holleran, Andrew 1943(?)- ..... **CLC 38**
See also CA 144; CANR 89, 162; GLL 1
Holley, Marietta 1836(?)-1926 ..... **TCLC 99**
See also CA 118; DLB 11; FL 1:3
Hollinghurst, Alan 1954- ..... **CLC 55, 91**
See also BRWS 10; CA 114; CN 5, 6, 7; DLB 207, 326; GLL 1
Hollis, Jim
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Holly, Buddy 1936-1959 ..... **TCLC 65**
See also CA 213
Holmes, Gordon
See Shiel, M. P.
Holmes, John
See Souster, (Holmes) Raymond
Holmes, John Clellon 1926-1988 ..... **CLC 56**
See also BG 1:2; CA 9-12R; 125; CANR 4; CN 1, 2, 3, 4; DLB 16, 237
Holmes, Oliver Wendell, Jr. 1841-1935 ..... **TCLC 77**
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Holmes, Raymond
See Souster, (Holmes) Raymond
Holt, Samuel
See Westlake, Donald E.
Holt, Victoria
See Hibbert, Eleanor Alice Burford
Holub, Miroslav 1923-1998 ..... **CLC 4**
See also CA 21-24R; 169; CANR 10; CDWLB 4; CWW 2; DLB 232; EWL 3; RGWL 3
Holz, Detlev
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Homer c. 8th cent. B.C.- ..... **CMLC 1, 16, 61, 121; PC 23; WLCS**
See also AW 1; CDWLB 1; DA; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM MST, POET; DLB 176; EFS 1:1, 2:1,2; LAIT 1; LMFS 1; RGWL 2, 3; TWA; WLIT 8; WP
Hong, Maxine Ting Ting
See Kingston, Maxine Hong
Hongo, Garrett Kaoru 1951- ..... **PC 23**
See also CA 133; CAAS 22; CP 5, 6, 7; DLB 120, 312; EWL 3; EXPP; PFS 25, 33; RGAL 4
Honig, Edwin 1919-2011 ..... **CLC 33**
See also CA 5-8R; CAAS 8; CANR 4, 45, 144; CP 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 5
Hood, Hugh (John Blagdon) 1928- . **CLC 15, 28, 273; SSC 42**
See also CA 49-52; CAAS 17; CANR 1, 33, 87; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 53; RGSF 2
Hood, Thomas 1799-1845 ..... **NCLC 16, 242; PC 93**
See also BRW 4; DLB 96; RGEL 2
Hooker, (Peter) Jeremy 1941- ..... **CLC 43**
See also CA 77-80; CANR 22; CP 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 40
Hooker, Richard 1554-1600 ..... **LC 95**
See also BRW 1; DLB 132; RGEL 2
Hooker, Thomas 1586-1647 ..... **LC 137**
See also DLB 24
hooks, bell 1952(?)- ..... **BLCS; CLC 94**
See also BW 2; CA 143; CANR 87, 126, 211; DLB 246; MTCW 2; MTFW 2005; SATA 115, 170
Hooper, Johnson Jones 1815-1862 ..... **NCLC 177**
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Hope, A(lec) D(erwent) 1907-2000 .... **CLC 3, 51; PC 56**
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Hope, Anthony 1863-1933 ..... **TCLC 83**
See also CA 157; DLB 153, 156; RGEL 2; RHW
Hope, Brian
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Hope, Christopher 1944- ..... **CLC 52**
See also AFW; CA 106; CANR 47, 101, 177; CN 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 225; SATA 62
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Hopkins, Gerard Manley
1844-1889 ..... **NCLC 17, 189; PC 15; WLC 3**
See also BRW 5; BRWR 2; CDBLB 1890-1914; DA; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM MST, POET; DLB 35, 57; EXPP; PAB; PFS 26, 40; RGEL 2; TEA; WP
Hopkins, John (Richard) 1931-1998 .. **CLC 4**
See also CA 85-88; 169; CBD; CD 5, 6
Hopkins, Pauline Elizabeth
1859-1930 ..... **BLC 1:2; TCLC 28, 251**
See also AFAW 2; BW 2, 3; CA 141; CANR 82; DAM MULT; DLB 50
Hopkinson, Francis 1737-1791 ..... **LC 25**
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Hopley-Woolrich, Cornell George
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See also CA 13-14; CANR 58, 156; CAP 1; CMW 4; DLB 226; MSW; MTCW 2
Horace 65B.C.-8B.C. . **CMLC 39, 125; PC 46**
See also AW 2; CDWLB 1; DLB 211; RGWL 2, 3; WLIT 8
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Horgan, Paul (George Vincent O'Shaughnessy) 1903-1995 .. **CLC 9, 53**
See also BPFB 2; CA 13-16R; 147; CANR 9, 35; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; DAM NOV; DLB 102, 212; DLBY 1985; INT CANR-9; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005; SATA 13; SATA-Obit 84; TCWW 1, 2
Horkheimer, Max 1895-1973 ..... **TCLC 132**
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Horn, Peter
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Hornby, Nick 1957(?)- ..... **CLC 243**
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Horne, Richard Henry Hengist
1802(?)-1884 ..... **NCLC 127**
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Hornem, Horace Esq.
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Horne Tooke, John 1736-1812 ..... **NCLC 195**
Horney, Karen (Clementine Theodore Danielsen) 1885-1952 ..... **TCLC 71**
See also CA 114; 165; DLB 246; FW
Hornung, E(rnest) W(illiam)
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See also CA 108; 160; CMW 4; DLB 70
Horovitz, Israel 1939- ..... **CLC 56**
See also CA 33-36R; CAD; CANR 46, 59; CD 5, 6; DAM DRAM; DLB 7, 341; MAL 5
Horton, George Moses
1797(?)-1883(?) ..... **NCLC 87**
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See von Horvath, Odon
Horwitz, Julius 1920-1986 ..... **CLC 14**
See also CA 9-12R; 119; CANR 12
Horwitz, Ronald
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Hospital, Janette Turner 1942- ..... **CLC 42, 145**
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See Hostos (y Bonilla), Eugenio Maria de
Hostos, Eugenio M. de
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Hostos, Eugenio Maria
See Hostos (y Bonilla), Eugenio Maria de
Hostos (y Bonilla), Eugenio Maria de
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See also CA 123; 131; HW 1
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Housman, A. E. 1859-1936 . **PC 2, 43; TCLC 1, 10; WLCS**
See also AAYA 66; BRW 6; CA 104; 125; DA; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM MST, POET; DLB 19, 284; EWL 3; EXPP; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005; PAB; PFS 4, 7, 40; RGEL 2; TEA; WP
Housman, Alfred Edward
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Housman, Laurence 1865-1959 ..... **TCLC 7**
See also CA 106; 155; DLB 10; FANT; RGEL 2; SATA 25
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Howard, E. J.
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Howard, Maureen 1930- ..... **CLC 5, 14, 46, 151**
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Howard, Richard 1929- ..... **CLC 7, 10, 47**
See also AITN 1; CA 85-88; CANR 25, 80, 154, 217; CP 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 5; INT CANR-25; MAL 5
Howard, Robert E 1906-1936 ..... **TCLC 8**
See also AAYA 80; BPFB 2; BYA 5; CA 105; 157; CANR 155; FANT; SUFW 1; TCWW 1, 2
Howard, Robert Ervin
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Howard, Sidney (Coe) 1891-1939 ..... **DC 42**
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Howard, Warren F.
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Howe, Fanny 1940- ..... **CLC 47**
See also CA 117, 187; CAAE 187; CAAS 27; CANR 70, 116, 184; CP 6, 7; CWP; SATA-Brief 52
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Howe, Irving 1920-1993 ..... **CLC 85**
See also AMWS 6; CA 9-12R; 141; CANR 21, 50; DLB 67; EWL 3; MAL 5; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005
Howe, Julia Ward 1819-1910 . **PC 81; TCLC 21**
See also CA 117; 191; DLB 1, 189, 235; FW
Howe, Susan 1937- ..... **CLC 72, 152; PC 54**
See also AMWS 4; CA 160; CANR 209; CP 5, 6, 7; CWP; DLB 120; FW; RGAL 4
Howe, Tina 1937- ..... **CLC 48; DC 43**
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Howell, James 1594(?)-1666 ..... **LC 13**
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Howes, Barbara 1914-1996 ..... **CLC 15**
See also CA 9-12R; 151; CAAS 3; CANR 53; CP 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; SATA 5; TCLE 1:1
Hrabal, Bohumil 1914-1997 ..... **CLC 13, 67; TCLC 155**
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Hubbard, L. Ron 1911-1986 ..... **CLC 43**
See also AAYA 64; CA 77-80; 118; CANR 52; CPW; DA3; DAM POP; FANT; MTCW 2; MTFW 2005; SFW 4
Hubbard, Lafayette Ronald
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Huch, Ricarda (Octavia)
1864-1947 ..... **TCLC 13**
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Hudson, Jeffrey
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Hughart, Barry 1934- ..... **CLC 39**
See also CA 137; FANT; SFW 4; SUFW 2
Hughes, Colin
See Creasey, John
Hughes, David (John) 1930-2005 ..... **CLC 48**
See also CA 116; 129; 238; CN 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 14
Hughes, Edward James
See Hughes, Ted
Hughes, James Langston
See Hughes, Langston

Hughes, Langston 1902-1967 ..... **BLC 1:2; CLC 1, 5, 10, 15, 35, 44, 108; DC 3; HR 1:2; PC 1, 53; SSC 6, 90; WLC 3**
See also AAYA 12; AFAW 1, 2; AMWR 1; AMWS 1; BW 1, 3; CA 1-4R; 25-28R; CANR 1, 34, 82; CDALB 1929-1941; CLR 17; DA; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM DRAM, MST, MULT, POET; DFS 6, 18; DLB 4, 7, 48, 51, 86, 228, 315; EWL 3; EXPP; EXPS; JRDA; LAIT 3; LMFS 2; MAICYA 1, 2; MAL 5; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005; NFS 21; PAB; PFS 1, 3, 6, 10, 15, 30, 38; RGAL 4; RGSF 2; SATA 4, 33; SSFS 4, 7, 29; TUS; WCH; WP; YAW

Hughes, Richard (Arthur Warren) 1900-1976 ..... **CLC 1, 11; TCLC 204**
See also CA 5-8R; 65-68; CANR 4; CN 1, 2; DAM NOV; DLB 15, 161; EWL 3; MTCW 1; RGEL 2; SATA 8; SATA-Obit 25

Hughes, Ted 1930-1998 . **CLC 2, 4, 9, 14, 37, 119; PC 7, 89**
See also BRWC 2; BRWR 2; BRWS 1; CA 1-4R; 171; CANR 1, 33, 66, 108; CLR 3, 131; CP 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM MST, POET; DLB 40, 161; EWL 3; EXPP; MAICYA 1, 2; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005; PAB; PFS 4, 19, 32; RGEL 2; SATA 49; SATA-Brief 27; SATA-Obit 107; TEA; YAW

Hughes, Thomas 1822-1896 ..... **NCLC 207**
See also BYA 3; CLR 160; DLB 18, 163; LAIT 2; RGEL 2; SATA 31

Hugo, Richard
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Hugo, Richard F(ranklin) 1923-1982 ..... **CLC 6, 18, 32; PC 68**
See also AMWS 6; CA 49-52; 108; CANR 3; CP 1, 2, 3; DAM POET; DLB 5, 206; EWL 3; MAL 5; PFS 17; RGAL 4

Hugo, Victor 1802-1885 ..... **DC 38; NCLC 3, 10, 21, 161, 189; PC 17; WLC 3**
See also AAYA 28; DA; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM DRAM, MST, NOV, POET; DLB 119, 192, 217; EFS 1:2, 2:1; EW 6; EXPN; GFL 1789 to the Present; LAIT 1, 2; NFS 5, 20; RGWL 2, 3; SATA 47; TWA

Hugo, Victor Marie
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Huidobro, Vicente
See Huidobro Fernandez, Vicente Garcia

Huidobro Fernandez, Vicente Garcia 1893-1948 ..... **TCLC 31**
See also CA 131; DLB 283; EWL 3; HW 1; LAW

Hulme, Keri 1947- ..... **CLC 39, 130**
See also CA 125; CANR 69; CN 4, 5, 6, 7; CP 6, 7; CWP; DLB 326; EWL 3; FW; INT CA-125; NFS 24

Hulme, T(homas) E(rnest) 1883-1917 ..... **TCLC 21**
See also BRWS 6; CA 117; 203; DLB 19

Humboldt, Alexander von 1769-1859 ..... **NCLC 170**
See also DLB 90

Humboldt, Wilhelm von 1767-1835 ..... **NCLC 134**
See also DLB 90

Hume, David 1711-1776 . **LC 7, 56, 156, 157, 197**
See also BRWS 3; DLB 104, 252, 336; LMFS 1; TEA

Humphrey, William 1924-1997 ..... **CLC 45**
See also AMWS 9; CA 77-80; 160; CANR 68; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; CSW; DLB 6, 212, 234, 278; TCWW 1, 2

Humphreys, Emyr Owen 1919- ..... **CLC 47**
See also CA 5-8R; CANR 3, 24; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; DLB 15

Humphreys, Josephine 1945- ..... **CLC 34, 57**
See also CA 121; 127; CANR 97; CSW; DLB 292; INT CA-127

Huneker, James Gibbons 1860-1921 ..... **TCLC 65**
See also CA 193; DLB 71; RGAL 4

Hungerford, Hesba Fay
See Brinsmead, H(esba) F(ay)

Hungerford, Pixie
See Brinsmead, H(esba) F(ay)

Hunt, E. Howard 1918-2007 ..... **CLC 3**
See also AITN 1; CA 45-48; 256; CANR 2, 47, 103, 160; CMW 4

Hunt, Everette Howard, Jr.
See Hunt, E. Howard

Hunt, Francesca
See Holland, Isabelle (Christian)

Hunt, Howard
See Hunt, E. Howard

Hunt, Kyle
See Creasey, John

Hunt, (James Henry) Leigh 1784-1859 ..... **NCLC 1, 70; PC 73**
See also DAM POET; DLB 96, 110, 144; RGEL 2; TEA

Hunt, Marsha 1946- ..... **CLC 70**
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Hunt, Violet 1866(?)-1942 ..... **TCLC 53**
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Hunter, E. Waldo
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Hunter, Evan 1926-2005 ..... **CLC 11, 31**
See also AAYA 39; BPFB 2; CA 5-8R; 241; CANR 5, 38, 62, 97, 149; CMW 4; CN 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; CPW; DAM POP; DLB 306; DLBY 1982; INT CANR-5; MSW; MTCW 1; SATA 25; SATA-Obit 167; SFW 4

Hunter, Kristin
See Lattany, Kristin Hunter

Hunter, Mary
See Austin, Mary Hunter

Hunter, Mollie 1922- ..... **CLC 21**
See also AAYA 13, 71; BYA 6; CANR 37, 78; CLR 25; DLB 161; JRDA; MAICYA 1, 2; SAAS 7; SATA 2, 54, 106, 139; SATA-Essay 139; WYA; YAW

Hunter, Robert (?)-1734 ..... **LC 7**

Hurston, Zora Neale 1891-1960 ..... **BLC 1:2; CLC 7, 30, 61; DC 12; HR 1:2; SSC 4, 80; TCLC 121, 131; WLCS**
See also AAYA 15, 71; AFAW 1, 2; AMWS 6; BW 1, 3; BYA 12; CA 85-88; CANR 61; CDALBS; DA; DA3; DAC; DAM MST, MULT, NOV; DFS 6; DLB 51, 86; EWL 3; EXPN; EXPS; FL 1:6; FW; LAIT 3; LATS 1:1; LMFS 2; MAL 5; MBL; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005; NFS 3; RGAL 4; RGSF 2; SSFS 1, 6, 11, 19, 21; TUS; YAW

Husserl, E. G.
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Husserl, Edmund (Gustav Albrecht) 1859-1938 ..... **TCLC 100**
See also CA 116; 133; DLB 296

Huston, John (Marcellus) 1906-1987 ..... **CLC 20**
See also CA 73-76; 123; CANR 34; DLB 26

Hustvedt, Siri 1955- ..... **CLC 76**
See also CA 137; CANR 149, 191, 223

Hutcheson, Francis 1694-1746 ..... **LC 157**
See also DLB 252

Hutchinson, Lucy 1620-1675 ..... **LC 149**

Hutten, Ulrich von 1488-1523 ..... **LC 16**
See also DLB 179

Huxley, Aldous 1894-1963 . **CLC 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 18, 35, 79; SSC 39; WLC 3**
See also AAYA 11; BPFB 2; BRW 7; CA 85-88; CANR 44, 99; CDBLB 1914-1945; CLR 151; DA; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM MST, NOV; DLB 36, 100, 162, 195, 255; EWL 3; EXPN; LAIT 5; LMFS 2; MTCW 1, 2; MTFW 2005; NFS 6; RGEL 2; SATA 63; SCFW 1, 2; SFW 4; TEA; YAW

Huxley, Aldous Leonard
See Huxley, Aldous

Huxley, T(homas) H(enry) 1825-1895 ..... **NCLC 67**
See also DLB 57; TEA

Huygens, Constantijn 1596-1687 ..... **LC 114**
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Huysmans, Charles Marie Georges
See Huysmans, Joris-Karl

Huysmans, Joris-Karl 1848-1907 ... **TCLC 7, 69, 212**
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Hwang, David Henry 1957- .... **CLC 55, 196; DC 4, 23**
See also AMWS 21; CA 127; 132; CAD; CANR 76, 124; CD 5, 6; DA3; DAM DRAM; DFS 11, 18, 29; DLB 212, 228, 312; INT CA-132; MAL 5; MTCW 2; MTFW 2005; RGAL 4

Hyatt, Daniel
See James, Daniel (Lewis)

Hyde, Anthony 1946- ..... **CLC 42**
See also CA 136; CCA 1

Hyde, Margaret O. 1917- ..... **CLC 21**
See also CA 1-4R; CANR 1, 36, 137, 181; CLR 23; JRDA; MAICYA 1, 2; SAAS 8; SATA 1, 42, 76, 139

Hyde, Margaret Oldroyd
See Hyde, Margaret O.

Hynes, James 1956(?)- ..... **CLC 65**
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Hypatia c. 370-415 ..... **CMLC 35**

Ian, Janis 1951- ..... **CLC 21**
See also CA 105; 187; CANR 206

Ibanez, Vicente Blasco
See Blasco Ibanez, Vicente

Ibarbourou, Juana de 1895(?)-1979 ..... **HLCS 2**
See also DLB 290; HW 1; LAW

Ibarguengoitia, Jorge 1928-1983 ..... **CLC 37; TCLC 148**
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Ibn Arabi 1165-1240 ..... **CMLC 105**

Ibn Battuta, Abu Abdalla 1304-1368(?) ..... **CMLC 57**
See also WLIT 2

Ibn Hazm 994-1064 ..... **CMLC 64**

Ibn Zaydun 1003-1070 ..... **CMLC 89**

Ibsen, Henrik 1828-1906 .... **DC 2, 30; TCLC 2, 8, 16, 37, 52; WLC 3**
See also AAYA 46; CA 104; 141; DA; DA3; DAB; DAC; DAM DRAM, MST; DFS 1, 6, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 25; DLB 354; EW 7; LAIT 2; LATS 1:1; MTFW 2005; RGWL 2, 3

Ibsen, Henrik Johan
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Ibuse, Masuji 1898-1993 ..... **CLC 22**
See also CA 127; 141; CWW 2; DLB 180; EWL 3; MJW; RGWL 3

Ibuse Masuji
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Ichikawa, Kon 1915-2008 ..... **CLC 20**
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Maysles, Albert 1926- ..... **CLC 16**
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McBrien, William 1930- ..... **CLC 44**
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McCabe, Pat
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McCall, Nathan 1955(?)- ..... **CLC 86**
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McCarthy, Charles
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McCarthy, Charles, Jr.
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McCarthy, Cormac 1933- .... **CLC 4, 57, 101, 204, 295, 310**
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McCartney, James Paul
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McFadden, David 1940- ..... **CLC 48**
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McGrath, Patrick 1950- ..... **CLC 55**
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